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What are they doing there? :

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WHAT ARE THEY DOING THERE?:

ACTING AND ANALYZING SAMUEL BECKETT'S _HAPPY DAYS_

by

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ABSTRACT

An invisible seesaw operates in Samuel Beckett's Happy Days. The mound in which the Winnie actress is embedded for about 90 minutes is humid, cramping, claustrophobic. Yet it also helps ban useless gestures, edit out awkward motions, spur natural movements. The text is a labyrinth of refrains, near-refrains and semi-refrains which can be unnervingly easy to interpolate and/or forget. Yet Beckett programs aides like mnemonic clues; easily defined rhythms; voices; even covers for mistakes. Continuous struggling makes the animator identify more fully with her character's plight: no mobility; a largely unresponsive partner; tarnished memories--nothing but a bag of run-down mementos, two piercing bells and an overwound mind to pace and animate an endless day.

Interpreting Happy Days is examined through breakdowns of performance chores: how animators invest, and reinvest, props with significance; how the Winnie actress synchronizes speech fragments and partial gestures, alone and with the Willie performer; how behavioral flow charts are constructed; how to foreshadow, retrace and generally link the two acts; how actors and characters align, veer and sometimes merge in the play's draining final stretch. The author also studies the advantages and disadvantages of using Beckett's many 1970s revisions of the first published text; how to sculpt and score words; how the playwright's

inherent musicality often undermines his demand for lack of tonal color.

Several theories are debunked. Willie is a central force, much more than a rude scourge on the mound's horizon line or a drowsy Caliban. Winnie constantly plays to him, especially during the 25 or so minutes he is hidden and silent in the second act. Winnie shifts more often and more quickly than is generally acknowledged. In one line she may be an original poet and a poor quoter of excerpts from literary classics. Happy Days is more than a time-lapse portrait of an ossified marriage, a low comedy and an extended meditation of physical and mental deterioration. It is also a compressionist view of how time, memory, things imprison humanity; a map of the unedited brain at work; a vivid metaphor for theatrical wins, losses and draws.

INTRODUCTION

LIVING WITH BECKETT'S STANDARDS

(A) An Overview of Interpreting Winnie Inside the Text

> What's she doing? he says--What's the idea? he says--stuck up to her diddies in the bleeding ground--coarse fellow--What does it mean? he says--What's it meant to mean?
>
> --Winnie imitating Mrs. Shower/Cooker, one of the "last human kind--to stray this way" (42-44).[1]

Light washes the dark stage area of the Samuel Beckett Theater in Manhattan. Winnie sleeps in a semi-fetal tuck, skirted by a heap of imitation scorched grass and rock-like earth. She balances a tableau of stillness and silence interrupted only by a tiny quiver and a short, deep inhalation. "Every time the lights came up, there would be this blast of heat, and I would gasp," recalls Aideen O'Kelly, the Winnie in Shivaun O'Casey's 1987 production. "It was like the feeling you get when you have a migraine. You can't look at the light, or you'll get awful flashes" (Interview).[2]

A few minutes later, O'Kelly voiced what she had lived. "...[B]laze of hellish light," Winnie muses early during her skittish toilet. "...[S]light headache sometimes ...occasional mild migraine." Instead of cursing her humid enclosure, Winnie admits there is "...so much to be thankful for...wonderful thing that ...nothing like it" (11). Games nudge her mind from pain's lip. She rummages

inside a cavernous bag of props. She wipes fingers across her hillock home. She tries to decipher the inscription on a toothbrush handle. When bored, depressed or simply curious, she attempts to rouse a tired, "coarse" fellow tucked into a rear nook of the mound. Her husband Willie's "marvellous gift," she points out, is sleeping through decay. "[N]o zest...for anything" preserves him (10).

O'Kelly, like Winnie, continued to deflect pain. Her throbbing head was forgotten as she speedily intercut fractured sentences and partial gestures. Making Winnie look and sound fidgety and graceful concerned her more than withering in a steam chamber or missing a homily or inserting a needless handkerchief wipe of Winnie's spectacles. In fact, her discomfort intensified her focus, which helped make Winnie act more naturally. "I was totally relaxed and totally rigid at the same time," explains O'Kelly. "I was happy; it wasn't depressing at all. The role took every ounce of discipline and talent I had" (Interview).

What is Winnie doing? wonder the Shower/Cookers in the Happy Days audience. This castaway invents anesthetics to dull her lingering sorrow. She transforms battered props into friends, educators, hand/eye exercises, goads. She imagines the crotchety, hermetic Willie as a perky suitor, a suave bridegroom, a whinnying husband, the flotsam and jetsam of offstage characters. She polishes tarnished memories of a wedding day which may have been "golden." She

miniaturizes broad expressions and maximizes flimsy victories. She excerpts bubbling literary classics from her school days. She airs out dreams of upward mobility with sing-song inflections and syncopated rhythms. She projects herself into a netherworld of melting flesh and moonlit, 100-hour days. Whenever Winnie learns she has no leverage in the quicksand of her life, she conjures old reliables: prayers, mantras, pet expressions, favorite yarns, quiet, stillness. These devices help her mold a shapeless environment and pace an endless day.

What's the idea with her interpreter? The Winnie actress imagines the mound as a home, a carousel ride, a triangle of energy, a costume. She constructs behavioral spines from hundreds of scattered clues. On these vertebrae she arranges Winnie's goals, actions and beats: what she admits, what she ignores, the resulting equations. Handling memorabilia like a marionette or *commedia dell'arte* trouper is not enough; like Winnie, the performer must reinvest props with kindly hands, coy looks, respect for their independent activity. Treating Willie solely as a Caliban won't do; she must also tap the lonely, frisky, sensible child/mother/wife. Winnie's animator has to blend intermittent, fleeting, ecstasy, terror, depression, peace. She must ride a seesaw of naturalism and stylization, heroism and pathos, defiance and resignation.

What does it mean for the character? Sorrow keeps bobbing up, floating through, wedging into Winnie's

facades. Moment by moment, neuron by neuron, her life decants. From her body seeps "...the liquid of melting flesh and puddling words and sounds and ever-disintegrating molecules of cries" (Blau in Gontarski 275). Into her body-mold tumble the dress of battered props; the echo of Willie's ancient news blurbs; the sediment of literary allusions; the painfully slow reactions of once vital muscles; the memory of memories. Winnie bakes her dwindling remains by overusing and literally overheating them. Her routines bind her, as Beckett described in his study of Proust, like "ballast...chains the dog to its vomit" (Gontarski Manuscript Study 17). Only here the vomit gradually, imperceptibly, ossifies into a rounded fortress, with Winnie living the second act as a disembodied head potted in a barren dune. For about 30 minutes--give or take an eternity--she is defenseless against sunburn, Willie's blazing stare, neck strain, ants--any weapon delivered by the unseen, unheard, but always felt, "inscrutable universe" (Reavey 2). She ends the play as "the remains of a life buried in a premature grave" (Fehsenfeld "Perspective" 50).

What's it meant to mean for the actress? Winnie's interpreter visualizes her divine prop master as a third character and plays to this entity. She buries herself in motivations and reactions, then digs herself out, denying intellect in performance as Winnie denies pain. She sings and hums raw and formal music: syncopated verbal and visual patterns; imagistic words and phrases; bursts of poetry; the

pure pitch of deep sleep; themes, motifs, rounds, notes, rests, arias, recitatives, codas. The performer sculpts the spacious, dense, medium-grade text like the heap forms her body. Occasionally she must volley with or ignore jokes not played on her character: an unswattable fly; glasses which slither out of reach; a parasol canopy which refuses to smoke or flame. If severely lonely in the second half, she can imagine her partner, hidden and anti-social, behind her. While Winnie wrings out time, her channeler plugs theatrical seconds with her own frustrations, doubts, fears, images of eccentric relatives, fatigue. In rare moments character and actress merge, both struggling to disguise childhood sexual abuse with palatable fictions.

"Terrible role ...Perhaps it's just madness." Beckett wryly noted three and a half months before the opening of the first production of Happy Days (Letter to Schneider 2 June 1961 Schneider Collection).[3] "There is a great deal about endurance in the play and about real fear," claims Martha Fehsenfeld, who fleshed out Winnie in a 1983 touring version. "You are alone for that hour and a half. You are on the high wire and there is no safety net" ("Perspective" 55). The balance pole? An extremely logical, symmetrical, therapeutic text.

Insanity is being waisted by a fake molehill for about 60 minutes and collared for approximately half an hour. The body bakes, the neck cricks, hips lock, calves cramp, depression creeps in, claustrophobia flashes. But Winnie's

fortress also helps ban useless gestures, edit out awkward motions, buttress and imbalance the actress like her character. The result is often a more natural, human characterization.

Madness is memorizing a labryinth of refrains, near-refrains, semi-refrains. Without full concentration, it can be unnervingly simple to interpolate or jump. Yet Winnie's buzzwords contain actorly aids: mnemonic clues; associations with events, names, places; easily defined rhythms; voices; pacing devices; even covers for mistakes.

Lunacy is remembering which hand moves which object at what time into and out of a market bag while weaving fractured sentences, partial movements, interrupted gestures, pauses, ellisions, head lowerings and raisings, and upper-torso dips, yanks and swivels. Once internalized, however, Winnie's intricate toilet will probably look effortless and robotic.

The performer must juggle these chores with little help from her mound mate. Willie is visible for perhaps one-fourth of Happy Days and responsive for less time. When he breaks the horizon line his partner can see only heaving shoulders; fingers creasing newsprint and snapping for the immediate return of a pornographic postcard; hands putting on and removing a handkerchief and boater; an occasional snapshot of a bone-weary crawl and a cramped nap. When he answers, he is terse: 42 words; a sneeze or two; a few yelps and chuckles; a parched attempt at singing; nasty and

woeful looks. In the second act, Winnie observes and hears nothing for about 25 minutes, at which point her spouse rounds the heap to pay court and flops spectacularly.

During certain passages the actors must handle props in synchronized, almost balletic, nearly musical fashion--without the benefit of visual cues and with precious few aural tips. Beckett is not entirely a sadist, as he offers to the actress a catalogue of prods designed to spur Willie even when he has apparently vanished. Winnie interpreters can drape this mannequin with inflections, subtext, irony, motivations, and their own yearning for a volleyer.

Beckett also guides by directing spectators. The actress can internalize the looks and thoughts of spectators through Winnie's animated tale about being observed by the curious, quarrelsome Shower/Cookers. She can follow her ward's lead and install herself inside an imaginary camera lens/human eye shooting a living motion picture. She can always count on her memorable set/costume to egg on onlookers. On one hand, it may annoy: "To focus for so long on no more than a head becomes an intolerable experience ... You want to do what the yokel in Show Boat did--leap to the stage and rescue the girl" (Kerr 1961). On the other hand, it may win her some fans: "You wonder how actors are stuffed in there. Far from being distracting theatrical trickery, the urns [of Play] encourage us to amplify the characters' plight through the actors' performance" (Worthen 419).[4]

(B) The Pros and Cons of Looking for Clues Outside the Script

Happy Days producers can find much advice in Beckett's thoroughly documented revisions of the play. One can review his preliminary notebook with fragments, three holographs and four full typescripts at Ohio State University (Gontarski Manuscript Study 7). One can examine Beckett's "vaguening" of pre-production texts in S.E. Gontarski's 1977 manuscript analysis. In James Knowlson's 1985 production study of Happy Days, one can discover how Beckett has tightened the play for the stage by comparing nuts and bolts from his 1971 Berlin version, Peter Hall's 1975 National Theatre interpretation (which the playwright consulted) and the author's 1979 vehicle at the Royal Court Theatre. About the only unavailable tool is a published merger of the original 1961 Grove Press text and the playwright's current master--although Beckett's 1971 and 1974-75 manuscript production notebooks and 1974 and 1979 corrected, annotated copies of published texts are housed at the University of Reading in England (Knowlson 203). American producers without access to Beckett's ideal script have had to do much cutting and pasting, a chore which has produced more than a few headaches before and during rehearsals.

One could also question Beckett. Although weakened by emphysema and other illnesses, the author still corresponds, receives interviewers at a favorite cafe near his Paris flat, even reads with actors he is not scheduled to direct

(O'Kelly and O'Casey, for example, heard Beckett recite before debuting their Happy Days). If out of circulation, there are many Becketteers--in theater, publishing and/or academic circles--who may speak for him.

Why should one follow Beckett's many alterations of the 1961 Grove Press edition? Chiefly because he is an expert dramaturge. His production bibles are crammed with rich details about practical and philosophical matters. In them he lists the full, accurate sources of Winnie's literary quotes (Knowlson 57-64); mentions each appearance of and variation on the phrase "the old style" (Knowlson 69); even diagrams and captions Winnie directing Willie's tortured slithering toward and into his cove (Knowlson 41). Many of his 1970s changes will improve a production. The first Winnie, for example, shifted her eyes from Willie's dirty postcard to look for her spectacles; today's character fumbles for them on the mound while she stares at the offensive item (Knowlson 193). This switch makes her funnier and more memorable: here is an avowed prude contradicting herself and demonstrating her eternal forgetfulness. Beckett's contemporary Winnie spends far less time fiddling with glasses, parasol and handkerchief than her ancestor (Knowlson 190-91). A less fussy character may calm the actress who has problems speaking in fragments while manipulating objects in stages.

Another good reason to use Beckett's 1970s tips is that ignoring them could bring punishments. The playwright has

many keen monitors who watch for and report on textual violations in the United States and abroad. Beckett protested publicly after watchdogs told him about a 1985 Endgame placed in a trashy abandoned subway station rather than his suggested "bare interior" with two small windows. In order to keep the version open, the American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge, Mass., inserted this Beckett disqualifier in its program: "Any production of Endgame which ignores my stage directions is completely unacceptable to me," not to mention a "parody" (Gussow 1985 C14). He underlined his disapproval by attaching the printed description of the interior. In short, disturbing Beckett may lead to a denial, threatened loss or loss of production rights, as well as filed demerits from professional theatrical agencies.

But theater is a practical, sometimes myopic business. Beckett spies occasionally miss distortions because productions are underpublicized. One can't subscribe to every periodical; occasionally one's detectives are distracted. Sometimes dramatic twists are ignored because they occur in non-professional, educational settings: witness the unpunished ring of wash basins, furniture and assorted manmade junk for a 1975 Stanford University version of Happy Days (Emerson 16).

Violators may also escape reprisal because Beckett is considerate. He permitted O'Casey to add two mounds to her Happy Days set--the reasons being that she is a longtime

ward/friend; Beckett admires her father, the late playwright and fellow Irishman Sean O'Casey, and the shallow stage of the Samuel Beckett Theater needed deepening (O'Casey interview). "It's your production" evidently was his only reply to the director's proposal (Yarrow C17). Perhaps he remembered that in 1971 he had allowed his set designer to add heaps for the same purpose at the Schiller-Theater Werkstatt in Berlin (Cohn "Beckett Directs Happy Days" 114).

Then again, decisions born of friendship and/or disinterest can sanction distortions. "Beckett just can't say no," indicates Fred Jordan, editor in chief of Grove Press, Beckett's American publisher. "I've seen this happen time and time again. People come and ask if they can illustrate his works, if they can do whatever with his plays. He never turns them down" (Lida 40).

Sometimes interpreters don't heed Beckett's tips because they are too demanding. It is true that Winnie seems to fade more if an actress adopts a taut, weightless "white voice" in the second act (Knowlson 127). But not every performer can create and maintain these pounding head tones for most of 30 minutes, especially when she must stiffen neck muscles and express with only her face at the same time.

Thematic disagreements may force interpreters to bypass the '70s changes. About nine years ago Beckett began suggesting that the Winnie actress lay down her brush and specs while Willie lowers his paper (Fehsenfeld audiotape

interview). While the onstage synchronization looks pleasingly choreographic, some directors may consider it unnaturally formal for scatterbrains who usually struggle to hear and see each other. Unlike the 1961 Winnie, today's character doesn't insist that Willie "...put a bit of jizz into" his final crawl (63; Knowlson 199). Beckett removed the line partly to emphasize that neither character can lend a hand to improve their lots. But he also edited out a choice example of Winnie's recurring ambivalence toward her partner--namely, her willingness to play cheerleader and nag. While three brands of turn to the bag--unbroken, broken and aborted (Knowlson 134)--make for a more precise Winnie, they may be overwhelming or irrelevant for a performer and her director.

Even the most faithful Becketteer has rejected the playwright's recommendations. O'Kelly feared that 90 or so minutes of recreating Beckett's largely toneless reading voice would dull the ears and attention of many spectators. So, at several junctions, she layered new inflections and accents (Interview). Billie Whitelaw, perhaps Beckett's most accurate medium, created a Winnie far more wary of "running out" than her director intended. The second act at the Royal Court featured fewer happy faces than suggested and even these breaks seemed somber on a haunting face swathed in ghostly "Blithe Spirit" make-up and thickly lined around the eyes with black pencil (Knowlson 15, 18).

Ghosts--they nest in the "Faint confused cries" (56)

rebounding in Winnie's brain and in countless vocalizations and cancellations of her song. Spirits also have flicked the performances of actors who have studied closely with Beckett and those who have closely observed Beckett regulars at work. In the 1979 London production, Whitelaw watched the author sculpt words with his mouth; onstage at the Royal Court, she channeled his rollingly elongated vowels; quickly closed, almost percussive following consonants, and floating, ethereal end notes. Fehsenfeld similarly "ghosted the mirror" when she toured as Winnie (Audiotape interview). Her partner, Bud Thorpe, a charter member of the San Quentin Drama Workshop, a veteran Beckett-slanted troupe, modeled Willie's mustache-tweaking fingers after Beckett's gnarled handshake. To improve his focus he aligned Beckett's physical handicaps with the corporeal deterioration of his characters (Interview). O'Kelly says she occasionally felt Beckett's luminous hourglass-shaped pupils tapping on her skull. Many of Winnie's defense mechanisms bobbed up with the actress' memories of lower middle-class airs in the Dublin suburbs of Dalkey, where she grew up, and Foxrock, where Beckett was raised and her mother lives. To deepen the terror of Winnie's recollection of a childhood rape, she dipped unconsciously into her own sexual abuse at age 9. For years this assault had been repressed by the same Irish Catholic society which had given her many of Winnie's illusory manners. O'Kelly's old fears and doubts echoed in Winnie's screams while the character's

inability to continue her narrative reflected O'Kelly's need to stop, relax, navigate, and build the courage to continue (Interview).

Ruth White never studied with Beckett. But she was lucky to have a director whose brain was a warehouse of the playwright's advice. Alan Schneider received Happy Days information during meetings in Europe, phone calls, correspondence and years of trying to freeze and/or adapt onstage Beckett's spoken and textual inflections. White understood these voices. Her fervent Catholicism gave her peace and order; her Irish heritage made her smile during wakes. Being a creative borrower, she filtered the mannerisms of two eccentric family friends into her hands, her signs, her song (White interview). Some of these qualities were picked up and translated by Irene Worth in Andrei Serban's 1979 production at the Public Theater in Manhattan. "She's there like a most wonderful ghost" said Worth of White prior to opening. Additional vibrations came from the same music box White had embraced in 1961 and 1965 (Gussow 1979 C10).[5]

(C) The Play in Context

All these external and internal demands make Winnie the most difficult of Beckett's straitjacket roles. Nell and Nagg's interpreters in Endgame are crammed into ashcans, but they perform much less than the Happy Days actress and never solo. They sit side by side, so cues are easier to find and they must lock into only one emotional mode--comic

crotchety. The human urns in Play need only to trade tonelessly a round-robin of staccato, metallic accusations and confessions. W1, W2 and M play not with each other, but to synchronized bands of light; being melted by an inquistor of floods and spots is not an issue, as it is with Winnie's animator. While the upper portions of the urns are narrower than the upper channel of the Happy Days mound, the actors are imprisoned for much less time: even with a repeat of the entire script, Play lasts for only half an hour.

Separation anxiety is the actress' top problem in Rockaby. It is disconcerting to rock alone listening to a tape recording of one's voice, the light growing fainter and smaller until only the face is illuminated. Whitelaw has admitted to being "frightened" by the thought of not moving and symbolic death intervening. "As long as the chair rocks," she has said, "my thoughts will continue" (Kalb 23). Yet the W performer is only required to tape a mostly droning voice, utter on stage four repeats of "more," and act for a mere 20 minutes. Not only that, a production assistant can handle the majority of the rocking (Kalb 23).

The Mouth in Not I is Winnie's closest rival in number of harsh challenges. Claustrophobia and sensory deprivation are among the dangers of sitting in a draped box with only a small aperture for mouth (or lips). "I felt I was tumbling through space and I could hear my own voice getting faster and faster," recalls Whitelaw (Manchester Guardian 12).[6] The Not I text is, in some ways, as hard to learn and retain

as that of Happy Days. Stichomythia, terror and incomprehensibility are usually exhausting to play, especially since the jaw can lock while delivering, with few breaks, the Mouth's 20-minute triphammer monologue (Worthen 417). But the Happy Days actress can't rely, as some nervous Mouths have, on lines fed by a video monitor hidden in a cubbyhole and operated by a production assistant (Brater " 'Absurd' Actor" 200).[7] Like Winnie, the Mouth appeals directly and indirectly to a vastly unresponsive partner. The Auditor, more executioner than friend, offers only four quasi-shrugs. But the Mouth actress is not required to volley with her partner, speak at a variety of tempos, twist relationships with her props, create a manipulator out of thin air, or straddle the line between absurdity, free will, and predeterminism.

Roger Blin realized that Winnie is a creature of many colors while casting his 1963 Paris production:

> When Sam first offered me the play, I thought of a number of different actresses who, physically, would have looked quite comic in the part, and certainly much funnier than Madeleine [Renaud]--a fat woman with big breasts, for instance. Then I realized that Winnie covered such a wide gamut of feelings and language that to cast a comic actress of that kind in the part would have amused everybody for about five minutes at the most...[Renaud] had acted in Feydeau, so she could cope very well with all that business in the first part of the play where, pitifully, the woman carries on with her life, when it seems impossible for her to carry on...But I also thought that, in the second part, she would be able to fade away, physically and progressively, while still carrying on with the game. Her game. A pitiful game with ever more reduced means (Bishop 232).[8]

Some reviewers have not noticed the width or detail of Renaud's spectrum. Reviewers have scolded her for being exclusively cheery, nostalgic, civilized, actorly. But these pigeonholers overlook the many personalities Renaud found simply by reciting the text, for Winnie without feathers is still a bird with many plumes. Yes, she is a hero who "plays the side that stood at Dunkirk and landed on the moon, who wrote King Lear and abolished slavery" (Stasio 1979). Yes, as Jacques Guicharnaud has implied, she is "...a yenta who bores the trapped viewers out of their skins" (Bermel 121). But these roles are mere book-ends. Crowding the shelf is the tranquil (perhaps dead) embryo and the stillborn infant; the frightened child and the young coquette; the doting, philosophical, nagging mother/wife; the prude and the sexually-charged woman; the "autobiographiliac" (Kalem 1979) and the silent breakdown artist; the spare syncopator and the careening wind-up doll; the original, derivative and sifting poet; the actress/ventriloquist and the cosmic prop; God's ward, prisoner and "poorer" (31) joke. Dozens of tinier identities float through countless moments, magnetized by Winnie's attempts to keep her mouth flapping and her blood coursing. Winnie is much more than "an opera unto herself with her character split into just as many voices with no underlying coherence or style, but with flourishes" (Ben-Zvi 3). She is Everywoman condemned to drifting in the vortex of an excruciatingly timeless day. To loan her only a

handful of roles is to bury her mercuriality. As Fehsenfeld notes: "This is an acting anthology, a workshop, a gymnastic event" (Audiotape interview).

The part of Willie is much easier to play and analyze, but more central than many have insisted. "Grim and grotesque" was all a reviewer could mention about Wyman Pendleton in Schneider's 1968 production in New York (Barnes 1968: 54). Four years later, Hume Cronyn earned only this laconic notice: "The requirements of the role are as much gymnastic as histrionic, and he meets all of them" (Oliver 1972: 123). Even Schneider, who directed these Willies and White's partner, John C. Becher, claimed: "I could think of a large number of actors who could accept a part with only a few lines and the audience seeing only the back of their head most of the evening" (Entrances 295). The director was half-joking, simply indicating the fact that many unemployed and/or lazy performers would gladly audition for such an apparently undemanding part.

In truth, Willie is much more than a rude scourge on the horizon. He is Winnie's only true audience. No matter how brief or crude his communiques, they are important because Winnie responds to each with zeal, as if they might be her last direct contact with him. When he refuses to answer, she soothes herself by imagining that he is listening and watching, essentially recreating his presence from increasingly fewer scraps. Willie concretizes Beckett's Theatrical aesthetic of "fundamental sounds" (Letter to

Schneider in Wolf and Fancher 185), or codes usually judged peripheral in more congested plays. To give Willie more visual prominence, Beckett in 1971 moved Winnie from center to left of mound (Cohn "Beckett Directs Happy Days" 114).

Finally, Happy Days is more than "...an exercise in futility and disintegration [which] makes for a surprisingly enlivening evening" (Kupferberg 1965). It is a portrait of a petered-out marriage; a map of the unedited brain at work; an extended meditation on physical and mental deterioration; a low comedy; a twist on *commedia dell'arte* staples; a cut-and-paste, grounded sonata; a punning, stagy tragedy. As actors confirm, it is also a metaphor for theatrical wins, losses and draws. "When I read the play for the first time I was overcome by it," explains Renaud, who has embodied Winnie many times:

> I was reading everything that I had not dared to think since...since my first middle-aged wrinkle. And how quickly those wrinkles come!
>
> It can seem cruel to play a Winnie, just as it can be cruel to cast any lucid glance at the human condition. It is true that no-one can go farther than Oh! Les Beaux Jours [Happy Days]. At any rate, I do not think so (Renaud 82).

This paper outlines how Winnie and their animators align, veer and occasionally merge. It shows how interpretations are constructed, deconstructed, reconstructed. It traces the organic flow of theater--how body type, make-up, design, and sense memory charge performances and alter the perception of them. It tells why two castaways have remained lingering presences for those who have lived and seen them.

CHAPTER 1

FUNNELING THE SPECTATOR'S EYE AND EAR

I.A. Winnie: Dreamer of Voyeurs

A bittersweet musing furrows Madeleine Renaud's forehead. The left eyebrow flattens; the right curls like a tilde. The mouth opens wide and emits a sigh, "as though to inhale life," then quickly clamps shut "in a firm grim line" (Kerr 1965 16). A warmer idea triggers a nostalgic smile, a resigned look, a shrug. One can almost see the neurons firing (HD videotape 1971).

A busy set might have obscured Renaud's portfolio of darting masks. A fellow actor's grimaces might have distracted viewers. Perhaps eyes in the audience would have traced the dance of light on a tightly-patterned curtain. Perhaps side-wall bookcases would have dispersed the narrow sightlines. But not here, not now. A stark unit set and a vivid frame of light funnel attention to a single area: Renaud's elegant clown face.

Spectacles and a magnifying glass improve Winnie's vision; for the spectator they symbolize the urge to glance closer. As if he needs to, Beckett programs other visual guides. The Shower/Cookers--English versions of German words for looking and peering--double as audience surrogates and a sly dig at those bewildered by onstage immobility. They function almost like mind-readers, channeling spectator questions about Winnie's subterranean clothes and Willie's refusal to uncover her. In addition, Winnie twice imagines

herself as the subject/object in a voyeur's camera-lens eye. "Strange feeling that someone is looking at me," she muses. "I am clear, then dim, then gone, then dim again, then clear again, and so on, back and forth, in and out of someone's eye" (40).

Beckett zooms closer in the second act. Most of Winnie's upper torso is buried, her head braced against the rear lip of her hole. She can't distract with swan-like swoops into her bag or trunk twists to follow the path of Willie's slitherings. Flickering eyes are her only method of conveying anxiety, contorting her face her sole way to visualize her existence. Her cheeks puff, her nose wrinkles, her eyes cross. Hundreds of lenses pan--except Willie's.

Once the camera freezes on the Happy Days actress, she must make her motions precise, intense, expressive. If her movements are broad and vague, spectator attention may swing to her arid environment. Twenty or so minutes of relentlessly bare mound will dull the senses and discourage sympathy. Beckett helps by blocking single, double and triple turns of the upper torso; head raising, freezing and lowering; reverent and blasé spectacle polishes; several types of looks at the toothbrush and bag. Like a corporeal mime or a novice Sanskrit actor--whose repertoire allegedly included six gestures per cheek, seven per chin and nine per neck (Bermel 121-22)--the Winnie actress works many muscles and/or joints in the most basic sequences. Whenever Irene

Worth, for example, scrunched her nose, her eyebrows becoming diagonals, as if her brain was yanking her face like a blind (HD/Serban videotape 1979).

Minutely fractured gestures help Winnie refresh the dry periods between the bells for waking and sleeping. They make her look as fidgety as she thinks. They physicalize her nattering bouts and contradict her silent tableaux. They are also a familiar Beckettian device for intensifying spectator attention. In Endgame the wheelchair frames Hamm, and when he enters Hamm's turf, Clov. In the television play Eh Joe, a woman's voice changes the behavior of a non-speaking male and the camera highlights the switches. In Rockaby, the bleeding darkness masks the rocker and rocker. The overhead lamp in Krapp's Last Tape flings a pool of light which grasps the ancient listener and his tape recorder, a prop which already melds Krapp elder and Krapp younger. Each move yields a new personality: sinister Krapp, flickering Krapp, silhouetted Krapp. In each of these works the visual mandate is: the tighter the tunnel, the sharper the eye and mind. Or, as Winnie reasons when equating her language block with Willie's locomotion breakdown: "That is what I find so wonderful, my two lamps, when one goes down, the other burns brighter" (36-37). Absence expands presence and presence magnifies absence.

Sounds carry this duality, too. Winnie's rustling handkerchief and mound-dragging fingernails probably would be marginalia on drawing-room/kitchen sets. They might be

obscured by murmurings from other performers, buzzing speakers, incidental music, special effects. Here Winnie's furtive, "modest" spitting of toothpaste fairly echoes. Worth increased the sense of aural espionage by swiveling, glancing around, bending over, ejecting toothpaste very daintily, and then shielding the crime with her hands (HD/Serban videotape 1979). Under her direction, an absurd act became more absurd: why all this effort and guilt when no one is around to applaud or scoff? Certainly the snot-eating Willie wouldn't care. Worth seized one of Winnie's key traits: even if no one will notice her act, she believes someone, something, will at least sense it. Once again, when one lamp fizzles, the other sizzles.[9]

I.B. Willie: Disruptor of Visions

Renaud's Winnie is slumping. She is considering routes around the dead-end of imprecise memory. "What is the alternative?" she wonders and pauses. "What is the al-?" Regis Outin's gale-force nose blow snuffs out her final three syllables and her resignation. Off tumbles his boater. A comic sound has keyed a humorous visual. As with Renaud's tilted eyebrow and Worth's scrunched nose, the brain has almost visibly directed a physical response (HD videotape 1971).

Since Willie graces the Happy Days borders so rarely, it makes sense that each of his tasks are microscoped and telescoped. Since the eye was not distracted by face and legs, it was easy to follow the heaving shoulders of Worth's

partner, George Voskovec, as he massaged, out of sight, imaginary vaseline into his private parts. The placid, compact horizon line of the Public Theater set also highlighted Voskovec's snapping fingers as they demanded the return of Willie's dirty postcard. When Worth/Winie dilly-dallied with the item, the actor emphatically pointed downward to the proper home for his mememto. His angular, stylized gestures counterpointed her gentle, almost indifferent drop of the card (HD/Serban videotape 1979).

Willie chiefly draws attention by making aurals. Each of his sounds and noises resonate for longer than they deserve. The stiff, ancient newsprint almost shouts as he crinkles, creases, folds and fans it. Jauntily tapping the boater onto his skull registers the fact that his rundown body still contains some jizz. Beckett values Willie's gutturals so highly that he now specifies not one but two nose blows--first a short ejection, then a longer one--after Winnie's reflection (Knowlson 170). Voskovec fractured these bursts into sub-gutturals. The first snort exploded and retracted; the second crescendoed and diminished, crescendoed and diminished, elastically. Multiple volumes, pitches, tones and overtones arose from what should be plain honks (HD/Serban videotape 1979).

Willie's clotted mumbles and neighs communicate as much, or as little, as words like "It" and "Yes." They register so emphatically because Winnie, her antennae raised for any morsel from her alienated husband, pounces on them; she

bends in his direction as quickly and as dramatically as Krapp leans toward taped revelations of his former, livelier identity. Newspaper snaps blanch her reveries. News snippets interrupt the adjusting of her hat. Willie's matter-of-fact announcement of "eggs"--the guest emmet's likely byproduct--prompts a freeze (30). "Castrated male swine"--Willie's definition of a hog--produces, after a beat, a "happy expression" (47). Willie's stares cheer, anger, wither, bewilder his mate. Winnie in the second act internalizes these sights and sounds into "Faint confused cries" (60). When she needs to quickly confirm her absent husband's existence she envisions that they come from Willie's locked mouth.

In Happy Days, as in all his plays, Beckett clarifies codes usually bypassed in civilized theater. By doing so, he concretizes one of his veteran creeds: "My work is a matter of *fundamental* [italics added] sounds (no joke intended), made as fully as possible, and I accept responsibility for nothing else. If people want to have headaches among the overtones, let them, and provide their own aspirin" (Letter to Schneider in Wolf and Fancher 185). Or, as a director once noted, Beckett "is not an existentialist, he's an essentialist" (Schneider Stanford notes: Schneider Papers).

CHAPTER 2

ADAPTING TO THE *HAPPY DAYS* SET

II.A. The Pressures and Pleasures of Winnie's Sculpting Cockpit

Magnified visuals and amplified aurals help crystallize the awareness of Happy Days onlookers. Actresses can fold this heightened scrutiny into their performances, mixing auditorium gazes with camera-like looks of fictional and real voyeurs. Or they can simply let their home compress their body and shape their interpretation.

"The earth is very tight today..." (28). Winnie's contemplation turns out to be the actress' condition. Animators claim that sitting stiffly--on a stool or a chair--for about 90 minutes severly fatigues lower-body parts. Backward cranes toward sky, zenith, and Willie can produce the "crick" Winnie says she earns from "admiring" her mound mate (46). Winnifred Mann, who played the character in S.E. Gortarski's 1988 Happy Days, reports that her arthritic neck was pummeled as she attempted to still her muscles for approximately half an hour. Further aggravation, she points out, came from rubbing and pushing against a neckbrace for leverage and peripheral peeks, the desire and inability to see backwards, and the tension of expressing through head alone. No wonder the actress felt lower-back pain as well (Interview).

"It was hard to find a comfortable posture that was not punishing," recalls Sada Thompson, who appeared in Alan

Schneider's 1968 production. Susan Einhorn, assistant director of Schneider's 1972 version, notes that daily rubdowns helped preserve the older bodies of Jessica Tandy and Hume Cronyn. They needed all the comfort they could get since Happy Days rotated over four weeks with the taxing Not I, Krapp's Last Tape and Act Without Words I (Interview). Billie Whitelaw outsmarted everyone by arranging for a hidden stage assistant to massage her legs (Thorpe interview).

The role of Winnie has produced many other relaxing devices. Claustrophobic Barbara Bain made a truce with her fortress. During rehearsals of Alan Mandell's 1985 production, she permitted an assistant to clamp the heap around her. During the Los Angeles run, she handled the task alone. "I locked myself in," she explains. "I needed to know I could get out of the mound. I had to get used to the sensation of the collar around my neck." Imagining the hillock as a balloon dress soothed her, too. When Winnie swayed to the Merry Widow waltz duet "I Love You So," Bain visualized herself wearing a sashaying ballgown, moving her arms "as if partnered in dance." The performer's other calming agents included her dance training ("I was comfortable being completely still") and an easygoing relationship with closeups hatched during years of television work, including feature parts on the series "Mission: Impossible" and "Space: 1999." So it was not surprising that "the pinspot on my face was like one long

closeup" (Interview).

In the first act Winnie describes her doubt by tracing second and index fingers around her heart. Here she pinpoints a source of her troubles, much like the lovesick Elizabethan actor or the bound, guilty Promethean performer might overplay the liver area. During a 1983 tour Martha Fehsenfeld built strings of mannerisms from tension points. The actress' spine bore the most prèssure in the first half. Balanced by this natural pivot, she used her arms to guide and brace her swivels, pushes, swoops, seesaws. In the second act stresses congregated around the base of her skull. Tightening the fulcrum improved her equilibrium and allowed her to visualize a semicircular curve between her eyes. On this imaginary line Fehsenfeld placed textual sanctuaries and snake pits which, once they flashed in her mind's eye, unhinged her body. This relaxing balance pole helped offset the teetering effects of eye strain (from the assaults of sustained side gazes and darting side glances), facial tension (from transferring body pressures to the forehead, cheeks, mouth, etc.), loneliness, cerebral and corporeal exhaustion, and close identification with a heroic, fading character. This "inward turning point" calmed Fehsenfeld just like mantras, violent self-corrections, silence, and stillness lull Winnie (Interview; "Perspective" 53).

Fehsenfeld located other balancing techniques in her home of wood, canvas, sisal and black/green tossed glass.

She projected herself into the cockpit of a stationary carnival ride dubbed "The Octopus" (Thorpe interview). Here she established a command post, a control tower, the apex of a pyramid of power. This mental configuration "gave me a great feeling of power onstage," explains the actress. "I was in control of my own world. I was my own center. I could control all the energy of the play because I was at that center, at that apex" (Interview).

In the first act, the apex radiated power in the upper torso. In the second, the pivot was more intense but less effective, thanks to its placement by the soft membrane at the rear of Fehsenfeld's head. In the first half, the actress' fingers, shoulders, wrists, arms, head, and nailfile visually narrated the cantankerous Shower/Cookers. In the second act, she transferred and narrowed these activities. "I isolated first one side of my face and then the other, using my cheeks, lips, and mouth muscles, speaking first with the man's voice and then with the woman's," she points out. "I decided on the central part of my face as the focus of Winnie's neutral voice in the narrative." A spectator, she recalls, insisted that her face resembled a vigorously stretched "rubberlike mask" ("Perspective" 57). Here was a sampler of the Sanskrittian actor or corporeal mime; here was the face as a puppet-show.

It is Beckett's joke that the stationary mound is a mental seesaw, a joke which has become less private since the author moved Winnie from center to left of molehill.

For the Winnie performer, balance is hard-won and easily lost. With nowhere to escape and little assistance from a farcically inadequate hat and parasol, the actress can be withered by intense lights and a humid mound. This is one area where character and interpreter diverge: the latter requires a more tangible umbrella than Winnie's hungering for the arrival of "the happy day when flesh melts at so many degrees..." (18). "I was constantly experimenting with clothes to feel cooler," says Sada Thompson (Interview). Jessica Tandy wore a chiffon dress and "merry widow" undergarment when she played Winnie in 1972. "She wanted to be sure she was comfortable," notes costume designer Sara Brook (Interview). Retinal burn troubled Mann until she convinced the Magic Theatre staff to dim the second-half lights (Interview). Once again, Whitelaw seemed to have the best idea. An under-the-mound fan, much like Winnie's hoped-for cooling moons, helped protect her from more than 70 aircraft-strength lamps, including 14 spots aimed at her body (Knowlson 189).

Draining heat is not the only outside-the-text problem. Actresses report that flying creatures have commonly visited their onstage lairs. These surprise guests have been attracted by bright, clear lights; dusty props, floors, set pieces; static human targets. During the second half of a performance, a fly crept around Angela Paton's face for approximately 20 minutes, lodging for a period in an eye. Arms pinned by her residence, the actress couldn't swat at

it. "It did not distract me," insists Paton, who alternated with Bain in 1985, "once the initial meeting was over" (Interview). Bain indicates that a moth once fluttered around her just before Winnie spots an emmet. For a few seconds she had to consider how she could explain this obvious disruption of the text, which at that time called for only one new sign of life. Like Paton, Bain couldn't think quickly enough to improvise a reaction--say, a shudder at predicting an army of moths "formicating," or crawling, over her body. "I just ignored it," says the performer. "In a different kind of play I would have had the freedom to do something different." She hesitates. "I should have used the fly like the emmet" (Interview). A fly once breezed into Aideen O'Kelly's hole while she was collared. She couldn't shoo it because any excess movement would have twitched a neck or facial muscle and thus broken the illusion of Winnie's deadness from the head down. So the actress ignored the intruder. "But it was sheer bloody agony" (Interview).[10]

On most Happy Days sets, powerful lights and few absorptive materials yield a relatively high amount of dust. In the first act, the Winnie actress can use her hands to stall or at least cover a sneeze. She can also hide an unscheduled reaction by blending it into one of Winnie's many busybody sequences. But hands can't come to the rescue in the second half. So the performer either must hope that spectators think that Beckett has programmed a

sneeze (after all, Willie blows his nose) or cancel the temptation. "I had an urge to sneeze," notes Bain. "Between speaking and telling myself not to, I managed not to" (Interview).

Beckett is not entirely a theatrical sadist. In Happy Days, he offers several therapies to reduce stress. Once memorized and naturalized, Winnie's minute movements can be liberating. Actresses don't have to worry about inventing a graceful, continuous series of motions to awaken Winnie from her head-down, crossed-arm slumber; all she has to do is follow Beckett's point-by-point diagram (Knowlson 183). Those who feel awkward about walking onstage are relieved of walking. Those with hang-dog arms and nervous hands can rely on an assortment of resting and hiding places: after all, what are Winnie's bag and the mound's divots, gouges, and bumps but abstractions and externalizations of pockets? Yeats attempted to ban unnecessary gestures with barrels; Beckett's framing device is more abstract (Chabert 25).

Some performers have discovered freedom in physical anguish. Sitting, with lower torso imprisoned, commonly knotted O'Kelly's hip, which was already victimized by degenerative arthritis. "The pain made me so alive, my focus was so clear, every nerve ending was alive," insists the actress, whose hip was replaced after her Manhattan run. Extremely tight side gazes applied tremendous pressure to Fehsenfeld's skull, a handicap which invigorated her characterization. "I have never felt my body so confined,"

she notes, "and my mind so active simultaneously" ("Perspective" 54).

An actress doesn't need to rationalize Winnie's condition. It is irrelevant if she has been punished for a crime, or if she was hurled or spat from the sky. Her abode simply holds the chunky residue of her overcrowded, overwhelmed body, and it is this visual image/metaphor which spectators usually remember longer than text or interpretation. "I can't remember the dialogue or the philosophy," writes a director of Sartre's Huis Clos years after he had guided it. "But the central picture--three people in hell, locked up in an eternal hotel room, remains fresh in my mind" (Brook 35).

Actresses can distribute this mound-as-metaphor through their body. They can imagine sand--the grains of time--seeping out of Winnie and forming a rigid castle around her. They can envision gradually, imperceptibly sinking into timelessness, "the best of all impossible worlds" (Schneider Cockefair notes: Schneider Papers).

II.B. Willie: Calmly Filling the Void

The actress' body is atrophied, cooked, buttressed, localized, diffused, and calmed by the heap. The rocky desert affects the Willie actor quite differently. This performer can exercise his legs in the first and second acts; in fact, Winnie the traffic cop scolds, arranges and blesses his movements. He can seek refuge from the stifling lamps in a mound pocket or under the stage (Hall 234).

Rigorous tension grips him only in the back and shoulder areas, where the hillock's crest supports him while he reads the newspaper and tidies his headgear. The Willie interpreter is not required to strain his neck by mimicking a tracking camera or periscope; his neck merely fractures a monotonous horizon line. Insects and itches are no bother: he can swipe and scratch out of sight. Since Beckett has made Willie a relatively primal figure, he can improvise within the audience's range finder and not disturb the fiction.

Winnie's animator struggles to dissolve her overwhelming sense of place, to fly off into the atmosphere. Willie's interpretor tries to pluck and internalize forms from "gazing or non-gazing at the gauze of the nothing-plain-and-air" (Reavey 2). One of his options is to mentally fill cavities of Winnie's memories. Here he can play, or replay, her perky beau, her fresh/moldy bridegroom, her mournful/indifferent husband. Here he can star as her child-like and senior-citizen alter egos, the upsetting identities she most often bypasses. Or he can project a dead Willie, a dream character in Winnie's slow-motion film of the mind.

But occasionally the world crowds him out, too. Actors indicate that Willie's cubbyhole can assault the body. While numbed arms and legs and sore joints may inject realism into Willie's spastic trip around the mound, they also make the performer especially ripe for more serious injuries. During Fehsenfeld's production, Bud Thorpe

rejected shin pads "because they wouldn't sit right with the pants." In exchange for clean lines and ease of movement he received bruises and burns as he yanked, slithered and slid over an embankment of wood, chicken wire, muslin and fiberglass dust. "I hurt for a long time, all because of five minutes," he claims (Interview). "I scraped my knees, my calves, my everything," chimes Wyman Pendleton, who hauled himself over a much smoother landscape in Schneider's 1968 production. "I drew blood, scratches. It was absolute hell to crawl out onto" (Interview).

Because the lamps toast her and because she wears a dress, the Winnie actress generally doesn't have to worry about auditorium drafts. Her semi-naked, frequently sheltered partner, however, must beware of chills. Pendleton wishes he would have worn a body suit instead of a G-string in the cavernous Billy Rose Theater. Even boxer shorts would have been warmer, he says (Interview).

CHAPTER 3

INVESTING, AND REINVESTING, BELONGINGS WITH SIGNIFICANCE

III.A. The Interrelationship of Winnie's Body and Bag

> But something tells me, Do not overdo the bag, Winnie, make use of it of course, let it help you...along, when stuck, by all means, but cast your mind forward, something tells me, cast your mind forward, Winnie, to the time when words must fail ...(32)

Irene Worth wags her finger and nods her head at Winnie's bag. She looks like a mother hen/school marm gently chiding a red-faced youngster. It is as if she has just nabbed a hand descending into an off-limits cookie jar. The only difference is, the fingers are her own.

A woman in her fifties cancelling an everyday dip into her bag is a puzzling sight. After all, who would care, or know, if Winnie swooped just one more time? The Shower/Cookers, a curious couple, have not yet appeared in Winnie's thoughts and Willie certainly isn't interested in her rituals. Far be it for him, who eats his snot, to criticize a premature reach for a bag. But Winnie insists she must save energy for a time when she will really need it. She believes she must not wear out her props, on which she would increasingly depend in a gloomier period.

Winnie's weary bag and its abused contents represent her under-utilized, over-stressed, decaying body turned inside out. In Beckett's master text, the bristles on her toothbrush are snarled or missing. These are counter-pointed by Winnie's raw gums (and, if the actress has dental

problems, rotting, jagged and/or absent teeth). The handle of Winnie's parasol is telescopic, its canopy clownishly tiny. Accordingly, Winnie needs protection from the melting sun, but what she gets is mechanical difficulties with the umbrella and an often overheated, run-down brain. More thread than pearl lines her necklace. Likewise, Winnie drops strands when she excerpts her literary classics. An elongated neck and worn label characterize the medicine bottle. Similarly, Winnie the ostrich fails to understand that the vessel doesn't contain the "six...level... tablespoonfuls" needed for daily rejuvenation of "keenness"; even if it did, these dregs could not guarantee "instantaneous ...improvement" (13). The music box emits a metallic tinkle, just as the faltering Winnie can produce only a squeak or an echo of a plea, both signs that her mind and body are out of sync and tune. The wrinkled, scratched bag with a "yawning maw" is "a massive potlike presence...among general bleachedness" (Knowlson 119, 185-87). Appropriately, all that remains of Winnie's beauty is "remains" (since Willie won't corroborate, we must accept her story). Her mouth is cavernous; an earthy "maw" grasps her; she blocks the vanishing point, an indication that her faculties are disappearing. Winnie interferes with the backdrop like a frumpy bag lady who has inadvertently wandered into, and been trapped inside, an almost vacant music hall. No wonder Beckett once suggested that the Happy Days props, set and costumes exude "a pathetic unsuccessful

realism, the kind of tawdriness you get in 3rd rate musical or pantomime, that quality of pompier, laughably earnest, bad imitation" (Letter to Schneider 1961: Schneider Collection).

Winnie rarely notices the tawdry features of her paraphernalia. She is more absorbed by seeing, touching and moving her belongings. These actions promote healthy operations like associations, exercise, education. In the first act, Winnie's props function as co-players; in the second, they are her only reliable friends. But even when used sparingly, they are erratic pleasers. On one hand, Winnie's toothbrush and toothpaste help save her teeth. Yet the former reminds her that Willie (and herself, and memory, and language, and time) is "running out" while the mirror reflects her puffy gums ("...good Lord!" 9). The hairbrush and comb organize her hair(s). Yet they revive the anxiety that her hair is unkempt. The magnifying glass and spectacles allow her to read the toothbrush-handle inscription "genuine pure hog's setae." Yet they magnify her loss: no sooner has she memorized the phrase then she forgets the definition of a hog. The medicine promises new spirits. Yet she tosses its container over her shoulder, shattering it, and, one assumes from his cry, denting Willie's skull. The bag guarantees that she will have a playmate when--and if-- Willie dies. It coaxes the memory of the happy day when a kinder, more mobile spouse bought it to improve her market jaunts. Its contents help tide her

over during the dry, lonely period between the bells for waking and sleeping. Yet despite countless rummages and manipulations, Winnie can't remember all 13 objects. It seems that the bag is as compartmentalized as her brain, and as vague, mysterious and bruised.[11]

Winnie treats her props lovingly, creatively, desperately. She embraces her vacuum, charges it, and instructs the invisible force to suck her up, like "gossamer" (34), into the great beyond. For her the sun and bells are entities to be welcomed ("Hail, holy light" 49) and winced at ("blaze of hellish light" 11). She admits that the latter goad and organize. She claims that the former provokes and sanctions communication with Willie, giving her an excuse to tell him to cover up. She exaggerates attitudes and gestures to refresh tired routines and to forget that her memorabilia, and by extension her existence, is "superfluous" (Reavey 2).

Winnie improvises on prop handling as *commedia dell'arte* actors twist *lazzi*. A *commedia* performer may trap an invisible fly and pluck off its wings. He or she can then (a) zealously gobble it; (b) let a spectator share the dainty meal; (c) parcel it out for the entire crowd. It is not enough for Winnie to conjure her wedding day, she must physically recreate it. Contemplating her inability to lay down or put on her hat convinces her to try something tangible. So she tugs a strand of hair from her head, places it between the thumb and forefinger of her left hand,

squints at it, and lets it fall. This is her cue to remember that Willie had praised her hair as "golden" after their wedding guests had left. She mimes the grasping of a champagne glass and scoops up an imaginary vessel to toast union, day and hair. Repeating Willie's wish for her hair to stay golden reminds her it is now white, a recognition which triggers a faltering and the abrupt end of her reverie (24).

Winnie also turns *commedia* actor to serenade Willie. "Marvellous gift..." represents her admiration for his deep sleeping. But then, as if whitewashing her praise, she apparently conks him with the butt of the umbrella. She seems a bit jealous of his indifference, as well as mindful of his poor hearing. Then, as if ignoring the pain she has inflicted, Winnie switches into a neutral mode: "...Wish I had it [the gift of deep sleep]" (12). Even Willie the *zanni*'s cry fails to quell her absentmindedness.

Winnie's interpreters have added their own *commedia* twists. Billie Whitelaw's wrist was quite limp and dainty as she feigned applying parasol butt to Leonard Fenton's head, but her pullback was taut and quick. Fenton's yelp then surprised and jerked her. In a moment, the wand-flicking fairy godmother had become a marionette. Whitelaw held the umbrella between her thumb and forefinger--the better to prove that her wrist was as active as her fingers; her elbow a hinge between forearm and shoulder; her upper torso a machine of ripples and shudders (HD/Beckett

videotape 1979). "You're making love to the props," explains Angela Paton. "It's a very precise ritual. The prop is related to your hands and wrists and elbows and shoulders" (Interview).

Winnie miniaturizes her actions as carefully as *commedia* troupers. She ventures beyond merely holding objects: she grasps them delicately between thumb and finger. She carefully shakes out her handkerchief before she wipes her glasses. It is not enough for her to simply swallow medicine: she must throw her arm out, yank her head back, swig, and toss the bottle (13-14). She knows that the comb and brush lurk in the bag, yet she intentionally forgets their location to give her something new to consider and move. "I usually leave them lying about and put them back all together," she admits (22). Later, she acknowledges her ability, and need, to go through the motions, claiming that once she believed she could prematurely insert things into the bag and remove them long before the bell for sleeping, thus "indefinitely" plugging time (45). Winnie is a stagy self-deceiver, a condition which separates her from real comedians. *Commedia* actors entertained for money and/or satisfaction; Winnie entertains largely to keep herself busy. She fractures actions and reactions because she is a fussbudget and because she needs to perk herself up.[12]

Actresses have often underlined Winnie the entertainer/busybody in performance. In the 1979 New York production, a contemplative Worth at one point moved parasol

from right to left hand. Then she swiveled front and examined her right palm. "Damp," she noted. She transferred the umbrella to her right hand so that she could review her left palm. "Ah well, no worse. (Head up, cheerfully.) No better, no worse, no change" (13). As Worth pronounced "no better," she eyed her right palm for the second time; on "no worse" she glanced at her left once again. It seemed as if she had turned her palms into puppets, animating them as she would later charge the bag/red-faced pupil. In short, she pricked Winnie's imagination and wasted time.

Whitelaw placed the toothbrush at eye level. Then she would examine it from several angles, evidently allowing the stage lights/sun to help her read the inscription. She treated the dental apparatus like a foreign object--like a relic from a former civilized age as ancient as the puzzling word "hog." Pathos lingered when she finally completed the entire reading and insisted, with awe and pride: "Hardly a day goes by without some addition to one's knowledge, however trifling" (18). This information and change stimulated her character. (HD/Beckett videotape 1979).

Aideen O'Kelly imitated a bird during her movements to and from the bag. She craned her neck left or center, extended her left arm like a wing, created a claw with her hand, and swooped shoulder, arm, wrists and fingers toward the depths. Here was a swan diving gracefully into invisible water. In the first act, when she could touch the

bag, O'Kelly hugged and stroked it "like a lover" (Interview), thus obeying Beckett's order: "Even when fondling...her principal treasure, her hands press it with the kind of intensity that suggests she wants its friendship forever" (Letter to Schneider 1961: Schneider Collection). O'Kelly also performed another of the author's suggestions: "When the bag is at the right height you peer in, see what things are there and then get them out. Peer, take, place. Peer, take, place. You peer more when you pick things up than when you put them down. Everything has its place" (Fehsenfeld "Perspective" 53).[13]

During her first meeting with the revolver, Winnie kisses and quickly returns it to the bag. Worth inserted new actions. The actress whooped when she initially saw the weapon, brushed the barrel with her lips, and tucked it away. Once again, a prop mimicked a naughty child. Whitelaw planted a lingering kiss on the butt, paused, and then inserted it in the bag. She appeared to be (a) paying last respects; (b) expanding the mystery (why would the larkish, often optimistic Winnie need a firearm?); (c) saving it for a darker day; (d) grooming spectators for the gun's later temptations. "Whitelaw's kiss parodies the kissing of a religious symbol like a bishop's ring. Worth kisses the gun the way one might kiss a crazy but protective friend" (Kroll 1979).

O'Kelly caressed the revolver like a long-lost lover. "I fondled it, kissed it, stroked it," she recalls.

"Winnie's 'out' is the gun. It is a safety valve for her. Other people have sleeping pills; she has a revolver. She's terrified of using it, she can always use it, but she doesn't want to know it's there." Appropriately, O'Kelly kept the weapon "at arm's length" and snuck worried, unscheduled looks at it in both acts (Interview). Winnifred Mann imagined Winnie trying to trick herself into ignoring the gun's existence. "Part of her chattering is to distract herself from the awareness of it," explains the actress. "She pulls it out as if she doesn't know where it came from" (Interview).

The revolver produces Winnie's most complicated responses to her props. This intricate alliance becomes apparent the second time she retrieves it, after she has skirted her warning not to "overdo" the bag. The weapon initially puzzles her. Why has one of the heaviest items stayed "uppermost" in the bag? The answer is that it has remained "uppermost" in Winnie's mind. The buzzword "uppermost" comes from the Robert Browning poem "Paracelus" (Knowlson 149), a childhood favorite of Winnie's. Hence the gun's affectionate nickname, "Brownie."[14] Retrieving a more soothing element seems to improve Winnie's gumption. She transports herself to a time when Willie was more alert. In this era he desperately needed her to prevent him from suicide. Winnie turns actress, one of her best roles, to mimic the pitiful Willie: "Take it away, Winnie, take it away, before I put myself out of my misery." The mound

becomes a catbird seat: "Oh I suppose it's a comfort to know you're there, but I'm tired of you" (33). A putdown aimed at the gun doubles as an unconscious knock at the cowardly Willie. "Uppermost," in short, gives Winnie the upper hand.

But it is the gun which really has the upper hand. After Winnie announces that she is "tired" of the weapon, she attempts to punish it by stranding it outside the bag. The act forces her to say "the old style," which makes her realize the old style has disappeared. Her smile and fire vanish (33).

Winnie's subservience to the gun increases toward the end of the first act. She is bedding her toiletries, gearing herself for the bell for sleep. She realizes that loose ends might upset her slumber. She starts to place the revolver in the bag, stops, leaves it on the mound. Her second-guessing torments her in the second half, when the revolver lies inches from her face and, for all intents and purposes, miles beyond her reach. In this act, she repeats "Brownie is here" three times to recall happier, more manageable days and to urge Willie to grab it, shoot her, and zip her from the region of melting flesh and 100-hour days. But Willie refuses to answer; it is apparently out of his reach, too. Winnie's act-one gun kiss ends up haunting her: she can neither receive the kiss of death nor afterlife. She and Willie must forever be eyed by the barrel of "the cast-off property of Ibsen or Chekhov,

tantalizing in its ineffectiveness, but no longer absolutely necessary except in the Congo" (Reavey 1). Winnie is damned to seeing, and realizing, that this "friendly elf" is beyond her control (Schneider 1961 director's script: Schneider Papers).

Winnie's parasol is another unwieldy animated prop. It begins as her farcical protection, her Willie prodder, her "lamp" of speech (Willie's lamp is mobility). No sooner has her newly rejuvenated mouth said, "That is what I find so wonderful, my two lamps, when one goes down the other burns brighter," then her umbrella begins to smoke. Winnie sniffs, blithely (and comically) flings the parasol over her right shoulder, and cranes to watch it burn and smolder. Then she pauses and blurts the punch line: "Ah earth you old extinguisher" (37).

Who or what is the old extinguisher? Several actresses have picked a third character. Call it what you like--Winnie's involuntary memory; an unusually active stage manager; a "divine overseer" (Schneider 1961 director's script: Schneider Papers); a "zookeeper"; "God...Beckett... The Avon Lady..." (Gill 1066)--this entity is the *deus ex machina* of Happy Days. But, as producers have discovered, even a *deus ex machina* may have glitches. Troublesome parasols have bedeviled many rehearsals and performances. Some have smoked instead of flamed; some have flamed too much; some have done nothing.

Instead of crossing their fingers, a few actresses have

capitalized on misfirings. After O'Kelly's sunshade failed to flash, she "carried on merrily." Out came a snappier, campier, more oratorical rendition of "Ah earth you old extinguisher" (Interview). In doing so the actress restored and magnified the irony of the incendiary prop. The notion that rock-like earth could smother fire is absurd. The idea that canvas earth could douse flame is more absurd. Exaggerating the extinguishing of a non-existent flame is beyond the absurd. Here is another case of performance outdistancing text--of the Winnie actress appearing to be loonier than her character.[15]

Uncontrollable belongings also help turn Winnie into a prop, a relationship expanded by designs for several Happy Days productions. In the version at the Public Theater, Worth wore a frilly pinkish dress, a purplish hat, and a green plume. She fronted a back-lit blue and white dropcloth dotted with cloud-like tufts. In the first act, she resembled a vaudevillian dancer/actress planted in a large, crude music box. In the second half her head seemed to float like a balloon (HD/Serban videotape 1979). Modeling a rose dress in front of a dominantly rose backdrop, Madeleine Renaud appeared to drift throughout the first act. Mary Poppins seemed to come to life whenever she fully extended her arm to loft the umbrella (HD videotape 1971).[16]

Whitelaw looked weighted down by comparison. Her black-lace dress, with a pink undergarment peeking through, topped

a curved heap of molten-looking, orange-painted canvas, shredded string, and sisal. In the second half, with her face covered spookily in "Blithe Spirit" make-up and her eye sockets blackened with pencil (Knowlson 73), she resembled a corpse/decayed mime peering from a burial mound. Two designs helped make Peggy Ashcroft's ruddier face dance ethereally in Peter Hall's 1975 staging. In the first act the actress crested on a "rolling desert of grey hills or a sea of breakers." For the first 25 or so minutes of the second half, light was focused only on her head (Pountney 102).[17]

Winnie's heroic investments in her bric-a-brac help to bury her. Symbolically, the nearly empty medicine bottle is her nearly decanted body. The cruel hint is that no tonic can bring her "instantaneous improvement." Philosophically, Winnie's keepsakes "...are the residue of past events. Their significance derives not from the functional value they held in [the] past but rather from their usefulness to her as she attempts to get through her present 'day' " (Lyons and Becker 298). Practically, the mound represents the compacting of "all the stuff one has accumulated in one's life. And where are you and does it ground you and immobilize you and does it set you free?" (Bain interview). Burying herself in paraphernalia helps Winnie become "the sentimental ostrich head-ensacked in a patch of potentially scorched earth" (Reavey 1).

III.B. Willie, the Subversive Inventor

George Voskovec relishes the dirty postcard after picking it up. He positions it in several ways, angling his head in tandem. He considers it much like Whitelaw viewed the toothbrush--with alternate shades of curiosity, puzzlement, awe, delight. He virtually embodies pathetic comedy: here is a man transforming pornography into an afternoon at a portrait gallery of paintings by the masters (HD/Serban videotape 1979).

Willie's props, like Winnie's, bear pluses and minuses. The lewd postcard grants its owner a brief jollity. But it also telegraphs that Willie can no longer pretzel himself like the images of the copulating hidden couple. His sexual potency long ago petered out; he is literally the "castrated male swine...Reared for slaughter" (47) looking at hogs--or sheep, or cows, or dogs.[18] The vaseline his partner urges him to rub into his private parts revives the arousal of masturbation; Voskovec's heaving shoulders concretized the memory (HD/Serban videotape 1979). But it is clear that Willie's member no longer responds accordingly. He can exercise only by stretching his arms and mind, by inserting himself between the pages of the newspaper and transporting himself to the memorable past. Yet his news flashes are ever-diminishing echoes which have been muttered for years. "Wanted bright boy": Winnie and Willie need a gravedigger more than a smart youngster. Reynolds' News cools Willie's face and protects him from the sun, but it offers little additional comfort. If Willie owned a bag (or a sack), it

would contain far fewer mementos than Winnie's, simply because his brain holds less gray matter. Hence he rummages less frequently than his partner.

Willie's items are as abused and as exaggerated as his condition. In Beckett's preferred production, the postcard is dog-eared and smudged; likewise, Willie's body is bruised and his mind hazy. The newsprint is stiff and yellowed; similarly, formaldehyde coagulates in his veins, jaundicing his hide. Snot, dirt and blood stain his handkerchief, his boater is dented, its ribbon is faded (Knowlson 187-88). Accordingly, the abrasive surface of the mound nicks, dents, scrapes and generally abuses his body.

Willie's neatness has a different root than Winnie's. Willie, as his partner indicates, has a "marvellous gift" for ignoring crises. Unlike Winnie, he is usually, blessedly indifferent to the wounding bells. He slowly and gingerly controls props because he is more decrepit and more doddering than Winnie. Willie's precision, like Winnie's, amuses because it is unnecessary: she cares more about responses than patterns; he has no dinner parties to attend, and he revels in grunting and snorting. His bouts of gentility are funnier than Winnie's because they are more incongruous and occasional.

Winnie fictionalizes to forget that her routines have ossified and that her props have lost much of their zest. Willie invents to derail her habits. When the sound of the bottle breaking startles him, he delays retaliation until

Winnie asks him about the emmet's activities. His answer, "Formication," is an inside joke. Because Winnie visualizes ants mounting her, she misses its witty aural connection to "fornication" (30). Willie proves, once again, that his fellow castaway is a sexual innocent. When Winnie mocks his inability to shoot himself, he doesn't attempt revenge until lunging for the gun near the end of the play. Winnie here cheerfully narrates another of his failures, at one point quizzing him about equally unattainable options (63). Willie ends as a crestfallen *zanni* whose props supervise his movements. His imprisonment is finalized when the bell for waking wills his head to raise for the first time.

Like Winnie, Willie is an adaptation of a *commedia* performer. Unlike paid actors, he occasionally toys with props simply to amuse himself and to divide, primp and pace his hours awake. Like professional entertainers, he works carefully and creatively. He turns his snot into food, much like the fly--relishing *commedia* actor. He fussily drapes a handkerchief over his skull. After a beat, he installs the boater on his head, rakishly tilts it, and taps it theatrically but softly to affix it (14). The process is later reversed twice and repeated once.

Commedia troupers are well known for hat-switching routines.[19] While Winnie and Willie never exchange headpieces, they do verbalize, changing each other's hat habits. He freezes her hat-placing sequence; she demands that he wear a "straw" to protect his balding head from the

sun. Winnie is a comically dignified *commedia* figure; Willie plays the grotesque undercutter. She worships regularity; he disregards "the established order of the world." He damages her "bourgeois smugness" and spotlights "the dwindling power of habit" (Kern 123).

Is Willie the unseen, unheard, prop master? Could he have raised himself and torched Winnie's canopy without her knowledge? Assaulted by her endless stutterings, it is likely that he would benefit from her lamp of speech extinguishing. One must remember, however, that Willie has already failed to answer Winnie's pleadings to coax her to relinquish the parasol, failing to respond to "Bid me put this thing down, Willie, I would obey you instantly, as I always have done, honoured and obeyed" (36). One must also remember that he later tempts her with a croaked version of her music-box tune but vetos her demand for an encore, silently insisting that he is not a rotating groom-doll. Of course, his staggering crawl proves that he really does belong on top of the music box--or at the peak of a moldy wedding cake. Instead of divine stage manager, call him another puppet of the inscrutable universe.

Willie the prop has much less impact than Winnie the prop. In Alan Mandell's 1985 production, Martin Beck's completely shaved head resembled a fleshy bowling ball or the mammoth swollen hind quarters of a giant emmet rising from a rocky slope (Beck interview). Wearing a skullcap which matted his natural hair, Bud Thorpe resembled an

animal-like ornament on a glassy, octopus-like carnival ride (Interview). Voskovec's handkerchief and boater simulated the headdress of a member of the French Foreign Legion (HD/Serban videotape 1979). John C. Becher's massively hairy arms added exotic texture to the already nubby mound of Alan Schneider's 1961 production (Schneider Entrances 299). When each of these actors popped up--a hand, a shoulder, a head at a time--they mimicked a faulty mechanical duck at a shooting gallery.

Add another layer to Winnie's burial mound. It is made of Willie's worn-out props, irrelevant routines, his titanic nonconformity. By refusing to disinterr his ostrich, he helps sink her a notch or two.

CHAPTER 4

The Formidable Business of Intercutting Fragments

> Poor Willie--(examines tube, smile off)--running out--(looks for cap)--ah well--(finds cap)--can't be helped--(screws on cap)--just one of those things--(lays down tube)--another of those old things--(turns toward bag)--just can't be cured--(rummages in bag)--cannot be cured (9).

Irene Worth choreographs this aural/visual sandwich effortlessly. Under her control, Winnie breezes through another morning in an invisible bathroom; warms up in an abstract dressing room; natters away like a seamstress in a deserted living room; chomps her words and gestures like an absentminded diner ("Poor Willie--[chew]--running out [chew]--[chew]--ah well--[swallow]..."). For the Happy Days actress this fluidity is hard won in rehearsals. It takes many hours to learn how to intercut verbal jabs with partial movements and gestural fragments. During her toilet Winnie praises Willie's talent for drowsiness, recites their corporeal decay ("blind next" 10), tries to define her objects ("genuine...pure...what?" 10). She plugs weak, hollow moments--the voids of distraction, boredom, anxiety--by pressing the toothpaste tube, scouring her teeth, inspecting her gums, polishing her glasses, creasing and unfolding her handkerchief. Winnie's verbality "represent a break from a series of mechanical, time-filling operations to a very fleeting, rather more intense awareness of the realities of being" (Knowlson 61). As she qualifies "occasional mild migraine" (11) with "...[it] goes" (12),

she arrests fussy tasks with busybody thoughts. Winnie, Beckett has indicated, is extraordinarily frivolous, "...a child-woman with a short attention span--sure one minute, unsure the next" (Knowlson 17, 16).

But bald intercutting is only one part of perfecting Winnie's intricate toilet. The actress must remember which hand moves which object in what order out of and into the bag. According to Beckett, the left hand should carry spectacles, toothpaste tube, mirror, magnifying glass and bottle; the right should handle lipstick, nail file, parasol, handkerchief; both should manipulate hat and music box. Winnie's props, says the playwright, should be removed in the following order: bag, parasol, toothbrush, tube, mirror, glasses/case, hairbrush, revolver, bottle, lipstick, hat, magnifying glass, music box, file. They should be inserted in the reverse order (Knowlson 119). Along one line, the performer splits and bends aurals and visuals; along another line, she chronologically fetches and distributes.

The key to accurate, natural mouth/hand/face/torso coordination, says Martha Fehsenfeld, is to work consecutively rather than simultaneously (Interview). Director Alan Schneider evidently agreed. "He didn't want things blurred, he didn't want you to pick up things and speak at the same time," claims Sada Thompson. "He wanted everything to be clean." The difficulty of sandwiching persuaded the veteran actress to learn her lines with

Schneider rather than memorizing them alone, her usual method (Interview). A degree of ambidexterity also helps, insists Winnifred Mann. The right-handed performer says she was handicapped at times when she had to call on her underused, relatively awkward left fingers. "It was unnatural to pick up things with my left hand and wipe them with my right" (Interview).

Always the expert blocker, Beckett has included covers for memory gaps and awkward balletics. An imbalanced actress can stall while rummaging in the bag, hem and haw while narrating the medicine-bottle directions ("Loss of spirits...lack of keenness...want of...appetite...infants ...children...adults" 13), prolong or stop ventriloquizing the Shower/Cookers while filing her nails. "Thank God," says Mann, that Beckett "didn't insist on every dash requiring a file" (Interview).

Intercutting also becomes simpler after Winnie's toilet, the character musing rather than jerking when she steers her belongings to the bag. Here the interpreter only has to make Winnie look slow and graceful rather than fluid, herky-jerky and/or mechanical. Here the mind/body gap is narrower and consequently not so taxing to fill. "...I learned to go *with* the offbeat...rhythms instead of against *them*," claims Fehsenfeld. "I subsequently realized to my joy that, rather than the frantic frenetic movement which I had feared would result, there were actually rests built into the score of the text. My body began to learn to sing the music of

Happy Days along with my voice" **("Perspective" 53).**

Beckett's 1970s revisions also represent a break for interpeters. Many of the movements of today's Winnie are shorter and easier than those of the 1961 model. Now she uses less energy finding, lowering, putting on and pushing up her spectacles (Knowlson 199, 200, 202). This means the intercutting is broader and less finicky. Of course, to fully capitalize on this tightening, one should merge the 1961 Grove Press text and Beckett's latest master before rehearsal begins. Peggy Ashcroft struggled initially after consultant Beckett ordered cuts in the parasol business during rehearsals of the National Theatre production (Hall 124).[20]

Mnemonic devices help the actress learn, retain and, if lost, navigate the choreography. "Running out" (9) links the flattened toothpaste tube to the draining Willie. "Ensign crimson" and "pale flag" (15) sound like lipstick names, which make them easier to remember when Winnie is speaking while applying lipstick. Projecting Willie's eventual blindness cues Winnie to lift her spectacles and weave an eyesight routine. She begins with "ah well," prostrates the glasses, then announces "seen enough." Lens wipes soon bisect an improvised fragment of an excerpt from a speech by Ophelia in Hamlet: "Woe woe is me to see what I see." Another round of polishing concludes the sequence (10). For the frantic performer, there is comforting symmetry and logic in breathing twice on each lens and delivering two

phrases per rub (10-11).

Beckett also assists by programming a large part of the blocking, leaving little to chance and accident. For the actress who worries primarily about Winnie's interior condition, the following series, offered here with chatter deleted, should be automatic once memorized: Winnie wipes glasses; arranges them on her face; cleans the magnifying glass; lowers it; dusts the hairbrush handle; puts down the brush and glass; raises the brush and examines it through the glass (17). After a few tries, the interpreter should find it entirely natural for Winnie to swivel to her right to spit, notice the sleeping Willie for the first time, twist to front, and rotate back to address him (9). As with the framing mound, Beckett's movement instructions help to ban many needless, distracting gestures.

But the actress has to master more than her own choreography. Willie, another flighty soul, serves as her intercutting prompter on several occasions. Four times his news bulletins stop her hands in mid-gesture. Four times his newspaper snaps cue her memory. The announcement of Dr. Carolus Hunter's death closes her eyes; Willie's page turn opens them and stirs her to rewind to perching on "Charlie" Hunter's lap in the rear garden at Borough Green (15-16).

This sandwiching is fairly conventional. Since the interplay is quite loose, the actress can afford to use only marionette-like motions--say, flinching at Willie's prod. Any missed prompts can be attributed to Winnie's reluctance

to end her reveries, Willie's sluggishness, environmental limitations (poor sightlines), physical defects (deafness, for example). But dual coordinations become exceedingly denser and tougher when invested with coloring devices like extra stops and starts, subtext, affective memory. Aideen O'Kelly and Barbara Bain outline the difficulties of juggling emotions convincingly while smoothly and accurately blending words, gestures, and movements between two actors.

Let us begin with Willie's first prompting of a Winnie dream. After he announces that Dr. Carolus Hunter is gone, she projects herself into a dark, musty toolshed, the location of what may have been her first sexual experience, with a Mr. Johns(t)on(e). Bain embroidered this mental expedition into a live motion picture. "I leaned back over the mound so that the [imagined] red-haired, bushy-haired fellow was above me," she explains. "I was getting in over my head: it was wild, oh dear what do I do, how do I get out of it or do I want to get out of it?" (Interview). The longer Bain remained bent over, the more vulnerable Winnie was, just as the character had evidently slipped farther and farther into the claustrophobic space with the far more wily, lecherous Mr. Johns(t)on(e). Bain, in short, externalized and visually sculpted Winnie's emotional tunneling.

Now reverse to Winnie's memory of her first and second kisses, her first (and only) ball. Her pauses separate the listing of the events, a sign that she has trouble conjuring

them or doesn't want to alight on them. "The first kiss was terribly disappointing," says O'Kelly of the subtext. "Mr. John-*stone* as in stone cold: there's more than a little sarcasm there. Winnie speaks of not being able to 'conceive,' which I take to mean that she can't bear children--she's barren. She may also be talking about her first time with Willie; after all, like Mr. Johnstone, he has a bushy mustache" (Interview).

No sooner have Winnie's first and final lovers merged, then "Wanted bright boy" and Willie's page turn cancel her bittersweet daydream. Suddenly, she realizes she has unveiled an embarrassing episode, perhaps for the first time. Suddenly, she is aware of her nakedness. To cover her gaffe, Winnie hurriedly, and finally, moves hat to head and nervously seeks her mirror. Hot flashes have replaced the "cold shivers" which chilled her fantasy (O'Kelly interview).

Winnie flees as painful consciousness invades, leaving the actress to milk the subtext. "Underneath, there's a lie," notes O'Kelly of Winnie's toolshed recollection. "There are undertones [of doubt and fear]." O'Kelly the actress didn't believe that Charley Hunter existed, "and yet I had to make him seem very real." The conflict between the voices of actress and character made O'Kelly's Winnie seem more unsure, more precarious during this episode. "It's tough to keep the rhythms going," summarizes the performer, "and keep the external thought going and the feelings going

at the same time" (Interview).

The Willie and Winnie interpreters do more than work together consecutively; they also trigger each other simultaneously. Beckett currently demands that the latter slowly lower her specs, magnifying glass, toothbrush, lipstick and/or mirror, while Willie dips his paper (Fehsenfeld "Perspective" 52). Her wrestlings with the toothbrush inscription twice causes him to stop fanning himself with Reynolds' News and to listen for a payoff. These cues are more difficult to follow than the consecutive ones: the sound of laying down a paper, for example, is much fainter than that of snapping rigid newsprint. They are also harder because the reactions must be immediate: while the Winnie actress can afford to delay her response to Willie's news blurbs, a delay in synchronizing the descent of props might lead to other missed prompts. The first sequence depends largely on emotions; the second hinges on timing.

Finally, since Willie and Winnie speak back to back,-- aurals are weaker and less clear than those produced speaking face to face, or if one performer addressed the back of the other's skull. "It's as if the words are coming from all over, not a specific area on stage," notes Martin Beck. "They're coming from God, so to speak" (Interview). "You don't have the advantage of the tennis game of another player," says Thompson, "that back-and-forthness that will lead you back to your story" (Interview).

How to guarantee an instant transition? Fehsenfeld advises teaming with a director/conductor who will count beats like a metronome, who will work overtime to make sure that the visual/aural synchronization is smooth and natural-looking (Interview). O'Kelly insists on collaborating with an actor she knows well. Familiarity with the tendencies of John Leighton's voice, she claims, made it easier to hear prompts without seeing him (Interview). Mann, who had never acted with A. Donald Cross, let him trigger the simultaneous sinking of objects because his sight lines were poorer (Interview). Beckett and his 1979 staff relied on technology, Leonard Fenton manipulating his paper only after a light had indicated that Whitelaw was moving her props (Knowlson 166).

Winnie and Willie's tuning-fork reactions are simpler to coordinate when pitch is high, volume is up, and rhythms are abrupt and repeated. The word "blessing," for example, is easier to hear than glasses being placed on canvas; hence the Willie actor can react--in this case, collapse--more quickly.[21] Winnie and Willie's dueling, stepped laughs over the implications of "formication," Beckett has reported, are "mirthless, colourless, all on one note. It's really a skeleton of a laugh" (Knowlson 74). If they were fleshier--if they had more tonal overlap--the intercutting would be more complicated.

A brand of visual music results when partners click with the coordinations. Peter Hall describes the heightened

interaction after Alan Webb had replaced Harry Lomax in the National Theatre version of Happy Days: "He's very powerful and it's made Winnie more vulnerable, more dependent on her hateful husband. Yet he only says 42 words under the stage. What an extraordinary thing communication in the theatre is" (Hall 313).

Until now, we have shown that the closer the actress' experience parallels Winnie's, the deeper her performance. But this is not the case with the Happy Days choreography. A performer may foul up if she consciously turns absentminded while intercutting or synchronizing. Too much identification can disrupt activities, which can rupture taut, graceful volleys as well as the characters' few symbiotic moments. Yet Beckett masks this possibility, too. Just as her interpreter errs in practice and may trip during the run, Winnie breaks down while talking and handling objects, and detours while conversing and following Willie's leads. Art imitates life and life mimics art. "Struggling to open her parasol she is energy at the breaking point," a critic observed of Madeleine Renaud. "Obviously her ribs are as rusty as the parasol's" (Kerr: 1965 16).

The Winnie actress can fold practical and philosophical advice into her interpretation. "Groping," says a knowing Mann, "comes naturally for Winnie and anyone playing this role" (Interview). "Relate frequency of broken speech and action to discontinuity of time," Beckett has pointed out. "Time experience incomprehensible transport from one

inextricable present to the next. Those past unremembered those to come inconceivable" (Cohn "Beckett Directs Happy Days" 113). In short, the actress can internalize additional layers of imprisonment. Pile the tossed-away, forgotten segments of Winnie and Willie's routines on top of Winnie's earthen/earthly girdle.

CHAPTER 5

IDENTIFYING AND SHAPING VERBAL MASSES

V.A. Winnie: Blocking the Wilderness of No Words and No Sounds

> Winnie: Can you hear me? (Pause.) I beseech you, Willie, just yes or no, can you hear me, just yes or nothing.
> Pause.
> Willie: Yes.
> Winnie: (turning front, same voice). And now?
> Willie: (more irritated) Yes.
> Winnie (less loud). And now?
> Willie: (violently). Yes.
> Winnie: (same voice). What? (Pause). What?
> Willie: (violently). Fear no more.
> Pause.
> Winnie: (same voice). No more what?
> (Pause.)
> Fear no more what?
> Willie: (violently). Fear no more! (25-26)

Willie despises being a guinea pig for Winnie's "Fear no more the heat of the sun" audibility test. To pacify him, his slightly sadistic--or merely dipsy--partner launches into a normal-voiced, gabbled apology. Aideen O'Kelly recalls that she took a huge breath, which gave her the leverage to greyhound through the first 66 words without pausing. She accelerated until "all I need," after which she braked. Her delivery throughout this speech was quite even-toned, the only inflection break coming on "gnawing at me." The triphammer pace and cyclical structure reminded the actress of herself as a frightened child spewing "Hail Mary's." "I would sit up in bed with the horrors," she notes. "Then I would gabble to keep away the dark, the evil thought that I would be taken over, possessed"

(Interview).[22]

Overwound doll is one of Winnie's many purely verbal roles. She is at her fastest in these periods of doubt. Fear and anxiety propel her brain around landmines and through asides. Overexertion usually yields an awkward and unsettling wind-down. "...[T]he way things...(voice breaks)...things...so wonderful" (39) is Winnie running out quickly. "There always remains something. (Pause.) Of everything. (Pause.) Some remains" (52) is Winnie pressing the brakes to stop the loss of words. Winnie slightly scared into confusion admits: "One keeps putting off--putting up--for fear of putting up--too soon--and the day goes by--quite by--without one's having put up--at all" (35). When Winnie is really at low tide, she conserves her energy with short mouth, cotton mouth, ragged mouth: "...to ask less--of a fellow creature--to put it mildly--whereas actually..." (29). "Winnie is always groping for lines, hoping desperately that something appropriate will come out," claims Winnifred Mann. "She's desperately seeking associations to keep going...She gabbles out of a panic, to keep really present, and out of fear of having antagonized Willie" (Interview).

Winnie the kitchen prattler lectures to real and imagined galleries. "Have you no handkerchief, darling?..." asks the doting mother of Willie the child. "Have you no delicacy?" (42). The righteously perturbed wife mocks her once-suicidal husband by recalling, in his voice: "Take

it away, Winnie, take it away, before I put myself out of my misery..." The kicker follows: "*Your* misery!" (33). The creative self-dialoguist crouches in the Shower/Cookers: "Do you hear me? he says--I do, she says, God help me--What do you mean, he says, God help you?..." (43). Winnie sounds most rooted, most middle class, when locked into this mode. "High articulation" is Beckett's advice for these passages--the better to reach the hard-of-hearing Willie (Knowlson 127).

Winnie is an expert gossip. She showcases her breathless blabbering especially during her toilet. A sing-song flightiness drives "Ah yes (inspects teeth in mirror)...poor dear Willie (tests upper front teeth with thumb, indistinctly)...good Lord!" (9). The magpie is less chipper when she says: "Oh I can well imagine what is passing through your mind, it is not enough to have to listen to the woman, now I must look at her as well...One does not appear to be asking a great deal, indeed at times it would seem hardly possible..." (29). Beckett recommends "neutral prattle" here (Knowlson 127).

Mantras are lifted from Winnie's cerebral bag. "Gently, Winnie"; "No no no"; "Do not overdo the bag" (32); "great mercies"; "One does all one can. One does it all" (24) and many other shopworn phrases momentarily block her from diving into fear or anxiety. "And now?," which usually frames pauses, is a scarier self-cue, because it reminds her that she must try to find an answer she may not have--or may

not desire to know. According to Beckett, these bridges should be linked by a tiny, secretive "interior voice" coming from "somewhere deep within her; childlike intimacy to self" (Cohn "Beckett Directs Happy Days" 127).

At times the above sections can be interpreted as the self-commands of a revving performer. "Begin, Winnie" can roll out "like the words of an actress steering herself to play the part one more time" (Kenner in Cooke 32). Or it can limp like Billie Whitelaw's "tired sigh" (Cohn Just Play 278). Or it can be a gentle chide, as Mann coaxed it (Interview). Martha Fehsenfeld caressed, extended, and generally romanced the l's in "Hail, holy light." She mustered Irish good cheer and slyness on "Ah earth you old extinguisher," a perfect tone for some chesty principal in a 19th-century touring Shakespearean company (Audiotape interview).

Ventriloquist is a sub-species of actress. Winnie channels the voices of Mr. John(s)ton(e), the pathetic Willie, the Shower/Cookers, Mildred. Irene Worth gave the line "last human kind--to stray this way" an edge of Brooklynese (HD/Serban videotape 1979). Many actresses have chosen Anglo/Irish or Cockney. Mr. Shower/Cooker was "rough, tough, lower, aggressive, almost like a tuba," explains Angela Paton. Mrs. Shower/Cooker "was very high, squeaky, nasal. It was a vaudeville turn" (Interview). Aideen O'Kelly's Mrs. dripped English-style "upperosity," or the verbal airs of the lower middle class in some Dublin

area circles. Visualized soft marbles impeded her speech; frantic, she swallowed a few, which produced a more open, cutting attack (Interview).

"That is the danger. (Turns front) To be guarded against" (35). Winnie builds anticipation of inadequately filled days with a pause and a touch of body English. "I see piles of pots," says the occasional/accidental poet, entering the final section of the toolshed episode. Here alliteration brushes the spectator/reader's ear. Winnie pauses and says "Tangles of bast." If she had uttered "rope" it would not have been nearly as alien or imagistic. "Bast" better summarizes her pretzel logic. For this "fibrous twine used by gardeners, also called 'bass'" (Beckett letter to Schneider 17 Aug. 1961: Schneider Collection) tangles easily, as the unsuspecting Winnie did when she mixed with the conniving Mr. John(s)ton(e). Winnie concludes her review with a pause and her most resonant burst: "The shadows deepening among the rafters" (16). By splitting and elasticizing her memory, she deepens the sense of place, the impact of that place on herself, and the drama of the event and its mental retrieval. The preparation, in turn, intensifies the comedy of the news blurb which follows and Winnie's red-faced coverup of her disclosure.

Winnie floats other precise, lingering words and phrases. "Damask" (36), "gossamer," "shiver" (39), "suspicion of brow" (52), "a sigh into my looking-glass" (21) and "gale of laughter" (21) are a few of her poetic

inventions. "Ensign crimson" and "pale flag" she recycles from Romeo and Juliet; "...envy the brute beast" (18) she cribs from Milton's Paradise Lost; "beechen green" is a truncation and rearrangement of Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale." Liberal borrowings from literary classics remind Winnie fondly of school years, tide her over when her thoughts dry, and fuel creative explosions. "I hope you are taking this in" she informs Willie after ejaculating "...the happy day to come when flesh melts at so many degrees and the night of the moon has so many hundred hours" (18), her version of an excerpt from Paradise Lost. Winnie's "high style" surprises her, claims Barbara Bain (Interview); Beckett labels these jump-offs "crises of loquaciousness" (Knowlson 77).

Winnie can be a sly poetic borrower. "Ensign crimson" is a striking encapsulation of Romeo's "Beauty's ensign crimson yet/Is crimson in thy lips and in/thy cheeks." Transforming Cymbeline's line "Fear no more the heat of the sun" to gauge Willie's hearing is clever. But occasionally Winnie's creative pirating backfires and testifies to the fact that she is fading. "Great mercies" is merely the residue of Psalm 40: 1-11: "Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord, let the loving tenderness and thy truth continually preserve me" (Gontarski "Literary Allusions" 322). Winnie omits even more when she revises a portion of "The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam." Out goes the book of verses, the jug of wine, the loaf of bread, the

singing "thou" in the "wilderness..."; "...is...er... paradise enow" (32) is all that remains. Beckett includes the hesitation to cast more doubt on Winnie's threadbare quoting.

Winnie's literary allusions are vestiges of the originals, just as her props, gestures, habits, body, and comprehension of time are the dregs of their parents. This point is highlighted when she directs excerpts at her nearly deaf, mute, and shriveled husband. "Fear no more the heat of the sun," already an out-of-context shortening in Winnie's mouth, is further reduced to "Fear no more" in his. "The classics are the old style. Her quoting...becomes a tragicomic and futile attempt to conjure what is patently dead" (Carey 125).

Many actresses have suffered through similar memory lapses during rehearsals and, much less commonly, performances. Consider Beckett's seductive traps. The refrain "That is what I find so wonderful" may easily be spoken too soon or too late. It is remarkably simple to add the wrong qualifier to the root clause "Oh this is a happy day!"; "This will have been a happy day..." can sneak in when no extension is required or can uproot the proper disclaimer. One can trip over Winnie's many descriptions of ascending mental movement, reversing "floats up, one fine day, out of the blue" and "float up into the blue" or interpolating "float up into the mind" and "drift up into the mind." The tiniest, most duplicated pieces of Winnie's

cracked cerebral mosaic/collage can't always be found. And, when grasped, they may not fit snugly.

Assembling the verbal puzzle accurately "was a matter of treading water," says Fehsenfeld, "of swimming while drowning, making it look like it was fun in order to get back to a place where I could...make it look like I was swimming and get my footing" (Audiotape Interview).

V.B. Linguistic Lifelines to Prevent, or Cover, Mistakes

Textual lifelines beckon survivors. Winnie's hesitations, mistakes and asides can actually cover linguistic flubs, just as controlling the wrong object with the wrong hand at the wrong time can be masked by Winnie's extended filing and tidying. Going up on lines can be sanctioned as acting out Winnie's fear of "What would I do without them, when words fail?..." (53).

Related sounds and unrelated neighboring words can also be linked. "Day" is in the vicinity of "pray"; two "course's" near "intercourse"; "down" alongside "rounds"; "deep trouble for the mind..." before "...But it does not trouble mine" (51). Objects coax sense memory: gazing at and feeling the flattened toothpaste tube reminds Winnie that Willie is running out, which in turn is a natural preface to "fleeting joys." Mysterious place names cue entire stories: the mention of Borough Green, under the horse-beech, helps nudge the memory of toolshed tanglings.

Struggling performers can hang on recycled, recreated, non-habitual phrases. Winnie transforms the harmless

inscription "genuine pure hog's setae" into "genuine pure filth!" (19), a condemnation of Willie's crude postcard. She bends his chuckling "formication" into a frustrated, desperate cry of "fornicating wilderness" (43). The moonish "day" of 100 hours, a symbol of "coolness and freshness" (Beckett letter to Schneider 1961: Schneider Collection), becomes "...asking for the moon," the denouement of Winnie's apology for raping Willie's ears.

Tips on voicings hide in a number of words and phrases. "Cast your mind forward, Winnie, to the time when words must fail..." (21) can be arced lightly, as an angler casts a line. "Sucked up" (33-34) can be accompanied by an inward breath, aspirated consonants, hollow cheeks. Phrases which describe upward movement ("float up," "bob up") may creep in or bubble--like Winnie's sorrow. "Ensign crimson" and "pale flag" can be fairly puckered or said through smacked lips, since they punctuate Winnie's lipstick ritual. The delivery of "No better...no worse. (Lays down mirror.) No change" (9) approximates the action of a dreamy seesaw: up, down, rest. The first dipthong in "Shower" can be spit; this is especially appropriate when one knows that in Cockney slang the word means "shit," as in "He's a right shower (shit)" (O'Kelly interview).

Beckett regulars have found other devices. Sculpting verbal masses is a common concept. "A person knows that language is written in stone, written in air, as if the words are carved," explains David Warrilow, who has

performed in a number of Beckett's short plays. The actor has picked up suggestions from reading Beckett's manuscripts, with their "...solid columns of words with no breaks, sometimes with no punctuation, capitalization...They're monolithic and delicate at same time" (Zurbrugg 97). For Warrilow words, sounds and noises form positive space; pauses, ellisions, caesura, and missed parts, negative space. Both divisions, he says, should be weighed equally. "That which is between the words is every bit as important as words themselves. The cabalists say that space may be inhabited by light; it's certainly not dead" (Zurbrugg 98).

Winnie frequently cuts and pastes word collages. Generally, she sculpts dense areas in the Willie apology; the Shower/Cooker and Mildred episodes; the Willie-crawl medley. More diffuse areas inhabit her word/object salads; gestures fill in silent moments like glaze or gauze. The eggs/"formication"/laughing sequence is an example of roughly treated, unfinished sculpture. Specifically, Winnie uses punctuation and lack of punctuation to drive the most densely packed, fleet sentences. Hyphens loosen and skew "poor Willie--running out." Commas and an absence of periods quicken and air out "Ah well what a joy in any case to hear you laugh again, Willie, I was convinced I never would, you never would" (31).

Using these tools, the following passage can be molded verbally (brackets indicate an undertone, a parenthesis, an

off-accent, a slant):

> **...[A]nd the fear so great, [certain days], of finding oneself...[left], with hours still to run, before the bell for sleep, [and nothing more to say], nothing more to do, that the days go by, [certain days go by], quite by, the bell goes, and little or nothing said, [little or nothing done] (35).**

Like the cabalists, Winnie takes all aurals and silences seriously. She fills voids with a deadened voice, a gentler accent, a falling inflection. Inside the brackets she converses with no one but herself; these are informal, furtive mantras. Syncopation arises from this burrowing inside and outside, up, down and around thoughts. Since Winnie's brain is off-balance, her linguistic patterns should also be tilted.

Carving gestures often accompanies sculpting words. Madeleine Renaud's hands moved like sewing needles as she caressed fragile words like "moon," "gossamer," and "golden"; in fact, her motions seemed to take some of the gutter from the guttural French (HD videotape 1971). Whitelaw, who in "Footfalls" twisted her spine and imagined herself as an Edvard Munch painting (Zurbrugg 109), watched closely the contortions of Beckett's mouth as he read Winnie's lines. In performance, the crash of the bottle and Fenton's cry tilted her head, yanked her mouth and jerked her accents (HD/Beckett videotape 1979).

Molding the body naturally coexists with verbal sculpture. One must remember that in many of Beckett's straitjacket roles "the body is *worked*, violated even, much

like the raw materials of the painter or sculptor, in the service of a systematic exploration of all possible relationships between the body and movement, the body and space, the body and objects, the body and light and the body and words" (Chabert 23). Perhaps if Winnie spoke more slowly and loosely more often, her fortress would be less suffocating.

Apply another tier to Winnie's prison: the forgotten or mangled segments of her quotes, missing punctuation, the actress' dropped lines.

V.C. Willie: One Syllable, Many Interpretations

But what of Willie and his 42 words? How many variations of "eggs" can there be? Quite a few, according to actors interviewed. Bud Thorpe says he offered "Wanted bright boy" and "Opening for smart youth" preciously, measuredly. "Wanted..." was delicate (think of comedian Stan Laurel's meek pronunciation), the inflection rising slightly on the second syllable. Thorpe then waited for a millisecond--a textual break, he claims--and balanced the words in "...bright boy." "It was very direct, in an informative sense," he notes. "I was saying: "Isn't this a good thing?" (Interview).

Martin Beck made the Reynolds' News "titbits" (62) a little harsher, more staccato, more ironic (Interview). John Leighton delivered "Wanted bright boy" neutrally and hopefully, transmitting both information and "yearning." Willie, he points out, had once been that "bright boy" and

wanted to be him again--perhaps to gratify himself, maybe to please Winnie (Interview). Thorpe's anger rose in increments during Winnie's audibility exam; Leighton took longer to boil and was less angry. Since the latter believed that Winnie had merely dented the quiet of Willie's imaginary men's club, he retorted with a touch of "upper-class dignity." Not surprisingly, his rhythms differed from Thorpe's. The latter enunciated relatively evenly while Leighton rode the stresses up and down (Interview).

Beck, Leighton, and Thorpe separated, as Beckett instructs, "Castrated male swine..." and "...Reared for slaughter." The more unctuous George Voskovec mashed together the clauses, as he did with most of Willie's aurals. Snorts and honks approximated the noises of a hog. Generally, Voskovec was a freer, more histrionic speaker than his compatriots. He tended to add hyphens and a stentorian tremolo and to crash-land final syllables. "Eggs" came out "eggz-zuh"; "Win" dissolved into "Wiii-nuuhh." "Wanted bright boy" sounded buoyant, bushy-tailed. There were Bronx cheers and gentler raspberries. In short, Voskovec often mimicked a sputtering machine (HD/Serban videotape 1979).[23]

Winnie occasionally notices that she is losing words; when she isn't aware, the astute, well-read listener can add the missing chunks of, say, her classic quotes. Willie is, to steal Winnie's out-of-context theft, a "coarse creature" (43). He refuses to join the "fear no more" game; he

doesn't applaud his wife as a clever Shakespearean, and he isn't creative enough to lift a quote for a practical purpose. All this Caliban can do is blurt obvious answers to Winnie's inquiries: "eggs," "castrated male swine," "Yes," "Win." His version of "I Love You So" is a croak rather than melodious singing. His news flashes are as crusty as the newspaper which binds them. These are the "far-off echos" of once-relevant events, read by the shell of a formerly whole man "simmering with tongue-tied emotion, impotently smiling into vacuity..." He is "uncoupled, unresolved man" (Reavey 2) who produces nearly as many gutturals as words. The foam on his palsied lips, the dried mucus on his nose, helps glue Winnie to her hole.

CHAPTER 6

FINDING THE MUSIC OF DEEP SLEEP

"One thing I found about words," says Martin Beck, "is that words can be really boring" (Interview). Words certainly don't make Winnie yawn. But then she, unlike Willie, doesn't have to listen to her verbal torrent. This autobiographiliac does find words inadequate and occasionally in alarmingly short supply. She worries about losing them but calms herself by insisting that sounds will tide her over. These aurals help form Winnie's visceral music.

Visceral music in Happy Days occurs whenever sounds and noises communicate faster than words. These effects can't always be described, analyzed or rationalized, mainly because they "are reports from the realm of deep sleep" (Zurbrugg-Warrilow 97). Winnie often reacts as if she's dueting with herself, or with her former identity (Whitelaw letter to Schneider). Her head is an echo chamber of cacophonous cries which unnerve her, and perhaps delay her song. Her scream as she visualizes Milly being attacked by a mouse cuts deeper because it is a window to a childhood sexual attack. It is as if her soul is creating a massive chord. The cry communicates quickly to listeners because it shocks, even though it is the natural climax to an accelerating, crescendoing memory. Angela Paton's Mr. Shower/Cooker harrumphed like a tuba. That is, one heard a tuba as one hears an early-morning or late-evening radio

program in the dark: half asleep, picking up stray notes, responding more to elephantine tones than arcs, progressions, or modulations--just as one gingerly handles objects when lying in bed or when poured into a mound (Fehsenfeld "Perspective" 53).

Beckett certainly knows about the quicksilver impact of music. For the second act he demands a "white" voice for the fading Winnie. This above-coloratura soprano contains many pitches and is ethereal, yet it sounds very pure and straightforward. Aideen O'Kelly compares the prevailing stresses to those of the highest, most taut, piston-like notes in the Queen of the Night's aria from The Magic Flute (Interview). The steady, pinched tone burrows under the skin; perhaps one could regard it as a more somber, narrower version of Paton's tuba. The "white" voice fascinates and moves because it seems so foreign, arising from such a flexible speaker; for once, it seems to emanate from outside its instrument/musician.

Irene Worth's second-half voice was too dynamic to be called white. Yet her rendition of The Merry Widow waltz affected like a *voix blanc*. It was so tense and so pure that it hovered above--or below--the music-box tinkle like a suspended cello or doublebass chord bleeds through the fattest symphonic weave. It pressed one's ears, heart, guts, psyche; it vibrated through Worth's body as if she was conversing in tongues (HD/Serban videotape 1979). The actress clearly knew the resonance of showcasing tone and

pitch; after all, several months earlier she had read Milly's dolly story and its interruptions to Earl Kim's atonal piano accompaniment (Shout 144).[24] Worth might not have known it, but she was "helping people to get in touch with something in themselves or to get in touch with places they know but maybe they've lost the ticket to..." (Warrilow in Zurbrugg 98).

The visceral music in Happy Days can be joined with a few Beckettian hypotheses. "Language generally in Beckett's world is not a means of conveying meaning, but a balm for the sores of existence" (Gontarski Manuscript Study 18). Willie's croaked "I Love You So" is more informal, guttural music than formal melody because it is totally naked and unaffected--as with Worth's sonorities, a case of body as instrument. It moves Winnie immediately because she doesn't have to reflect on it; she is so surprised, and delighted, at the air being brushed by vocal cords other than hers, and by the vocalization of such a sacred tune. She can't misinterpret the message as she misinterprets "eggs." She doesn't have to waste energy hearing it. All she has to do is let Willie's verbal breeze pass through her.

"I'm interested in the shape of ideas," Beckett has said, "even if I do not believe them" (Gontarski Manuscript Study 4). The visceral-music translation is: the sound of notes cuts deeper than the notes themselves. Winnie may no longer believe that Willie loves her but she will sing her love song regardless. No matter how out of key her perfor-

mance, the ditty's regular, even shopworn patterns will trigger automatic feelings. Words, and their literary meanings, are secondary.

"Writing is not about something; it is that something itself...," Beckett once wrote of Joyce's style. "When the sense is asleep, the words go to sleep...When the sense is dancing, the words dance" (Gontarski Manuscript Study 4). Winnie mourns like a lugubrious cello after Millie's story has momentarily dissolved her pluck. But she clatters like percussion when she recreates, for the first time, the Shower/Cookers. Her syncopated nail filing adds irregular rhythms to these vastly contrary figures. He, being more assertive, rates the on-beats; she, the meeker one, earns the off-accents. The rests arrive when Winnie lifts the file from her nails. Winnie stops tidying, or singing, when the Shower/Cookers silently ponder the mound-bound couple, when they exist for her simply as a foggy silhouette on the horizon of her mind's eye.

A semi-formal musical structure also girds Happy Days. The play begins and ends with a tableau and a bell; act one concludes with Winnie and Willie's newspaper/hat cues. Themes are endlessly modulated: Winnie and Willie summon many games to enliven an oppressively long, arid day; to coddle pleasure and escape pain; to commemorate tiny triumphs; to slip out of the vise of accumulating time and memory. Motifs include the fear of failing words and self-corrections. As in a classical composition, each element

hinges on something else. "If you drop a word or a movement," says Barbara Bain, "it's like dropping a movement from the middle of a symphony" (Interview). "Beckett is a painter," claims director Alan Mandell, "and the colors are subtle, subtle tones. I knew how long a pause was intended. It's not just empty space; things don't just grind to a pause" (Interview).

Winnie's sing-song, seesaw words carry lighter, more heartfelt music: "...it comes...then goes" (12); "No better, no worse, no change" (13); "Another/heavenly day" (8); "I call to the eye of the mind" (58). Lyricism breathes from British expressions. "Bumper" (60)--as in to "drink a bumper, toss off a brimming glass. It's the Happy Days toast" (Beckett letter to Schneider 17 Aug. 1961: Schneider Collection)--echos longer than "full glass." "...I am in tongue again" (36) is more stirring than "I can talk again." "...[C]an it be I have put on flesh..." (28) is more melodious than "Have I put on weight?"

Winnie quickly changes volume, tempo, inflection, key and pitch, most regularly when she is re-enacting stories and mimicking. Her pauses function like musical rests. She flies into arias and recitatives, sometimes mixtures of both. Like an opera singer, dancer or musical performer, the Winnie actress often plugs these gaps with sighs, glances, blinks, finger, and facial movements. Paton's "No no no's" flowed in lesato style; her and Martin Beck's audibility-test responds crescendoed one by one; their

staggered laughs were orchestrated in overlapping tiers (Mandell interview).[25]

The most obvious sign of formal musical structure is "I Love You So." It resembles a coda, capping numerous attempts to make Willie pay heed, numerous masks, and numerous thoughts about the pros and cons of singing. "Winnie has several personalities; there are several instruments in each of several characters," claims Fehsenfeld. "Once I found the music, all I had to do was sing the song" (Audiotape interview).

Visual music inhabits Winnie's choreographed toilet; the synchronization of lowered objects; Winnie's body swaying to the melody of The Merry Widow waltz duet, her arms hugging the music box. Visual music also guides the single, fluid movement Beckett has ordered for Winnie's awakening from her first sleeping pose. According to the playwright, the actress should start moving the fingers on her right hand, then her arms, then her upper body, then her head--one signal traveling along a continuous circuit. "Expansion and contraction," Beckett notes. "Opening awakening not to be played realistically, but should follow principle of grace and economy of movement...What a graceful, precise manipulator she is" (Knowlson 59).

Beckett frequently dismisses actorly "color," most notably in textual refrains. For one thing, the playwright wants to limit unnecessary repetitions: he believes that Winnie's pet expressions have "...already been told in

narrative tone on countless preceding days" (Letter to Schneider 12 Sept. 1961: Schneider Collection). He also insists that affectations can muffle resonant words. An imagistic phrase like "the happy day when flesh melts at so many degrees and the night of the moon has so many hundred hours" (18) caresses the ear best when it is said most simply; additional stresses--say, "the HAPPY DAY when flesh MELTS..."--would be distracting, dissonant. Left bare, Beckett insists, overtones will be clear and perhaps subtext will appear easily, spectators becoming aware that Winnie is not aware that she is out of tune. "I think when he says no colour, no emotion," notes Billie Whitelaw, "he means, don't act, for God's sake" (Kalb 22).

Most importantly, Beckett the musical writer and theatrical conductor tries to give classical form to repetitions. In Happy Days, physical refrains come in triplets--Winnie addressing the bag three times, for example. A looping, time-delayed Winnie switches her smile on and off when she hears herself say the word "old" in "the old style." "Oh this is a happy day" surfaces again and again, sometimes exactly, sometimes in a minutely different arrangement. Like a musical motif, the assertion awakens, familiarizes, signals, summarizes, bridges. It helps crystallize the Beckett belief/doctrine that "Producers don't seem to have any sense of form in movement, the kind of form one finds in music, for instance, where themes keep recurring. When in a text, actions are repeated, they ought

to be made unusual the first time, so that when they happen again--in exactly the same way--the audience will recognize them from before" (Marowitz 44). The playwright has also offered this advice in rehearsals. "Remember that you say ["the old style"] so often the movement says it for you," he suggested to Whitelaw in 1979. "It could almost be inaudible" (Knowlson 51). "Once you've established the way of saying it, you say it the same way each time as in 'NO? You don't?' and 'No, you won't?' It's as if you were prepared for his negative response" (Fehsenfeld "Perspective" 52). In short, introducing a frequently repeated phrase slowly and carefully will allow the performer to move audiences with increasing casualness.

CHAPTER 7

TRACING THE ARCS OF PERFORMANCE

VII.A. Identifying the Happy Days Rhythm; Debating the Musicality of Monotone

Winnie is warming up with a reverie of imagined freedom. She envisions the earth cracking, gravity loosening its hold, her body mingling with the sky like "gossamer." "Don't you ever have that feeling, Willie, of being sucked up?" she asks and pauses. "Don't you have to cling on sometimes, Willie?..." (33-34). Her lewd listener beelines to a suggestive word. "*Sucked* up?" he asks, thus missing Winnie's serve and failing to praise, or even admit, her wanderlust.

Wind knocked out, Winnie is tugged back to earth. Once grounded, she slowly buries her lofty goals. She sinks after insisting that "natural laws" are unchangeable. She descends another notch when she recalls that she felt more liberated when "young...and foolish and...(faltering, head down)...beautiful...possibly...lovely...in a way...to look at. (Pause. Head up.) Forgive me, Willie, sorrow keeps breaking in" (34). But Winnie is not entirely a feeble thrush. She finds "great mercies" in Willie's presence, his random attentiveness and the consolation that "nothing grows"--i.e., she won't be suffocated by a rising mound (34).

Expand, contract, expand. Embrace, recoil, embrace. Beat, no beat, beat. This is the Happy Days gestalt. The

actress' through-line is to latch onto a pleasant escape, lose the diversion, look for another.

"A bird with oil on its feathers," Winnie's creator has called her (Cohn "Beckett Directs Happy Days" 125). Winnie can't physically enter her mental dreamland, but she doesn't stop trying and failing. "She yearns to fly, she speaks of nightingales, of floating up into the blue.

> Her arms are wings but they are useless; they have let her down--they won't take her up. She stares into the azure but she can't join it. She sings her song like the thrush or the bird of dawning, but she can't soar as they can. She is trapped in the ground. Grounded. She can only reach for the sky and remember when she was free as air (Fehsenfeld "Perspective" 50).

Or, to put it more prosaically: "When, by chance, we grasp the carrot at the end of the stick, we realize that we really wanted a radish" (Gontarski Manuscript Study 22).

This syncopated rhythm tattoos every cranny of Happy Days. Winnie shuffles eyeglasses, speaks, shuffles specs. She raises her hat, stops in mid-gesture, lowers her hands. She happens on a fragment of a literary classic, drops its middle, picks up the conclusion. She blurts a word or two, pauses in desperation, ejaculates a phrase. Mrs. Shower/Cooker douses her husband, he shouts her down, they leave with hands locked. Winnie imagines being sucked up, learns she is being sucked down, visualizes the tug of a cosmic vacuum.

Winnie rebounds most frequently off the past. She recalls that she crested on her wedding day, when a more

attentive Willie saluted her "golden" hair with a "bumper" of "pink fizz." Shortly afterward, he bought her the precious market bag. Back then, she reminisces, she had youth, beauty, mobility. Back then, Willie more commonly removed his head from behind Reynolds' News to gaze at her. Now Winnie is fading, Willie is nearly gone, and the bag is decrepit. Winnie reaches for her golden memories and finds them tarnished, not so quixotic after all.

Her letdown routine debuts in her opening chore. "Old things," she notes and pauses: we assume that she freezes on the notion of a rundown Willie and a depleted toothpaste tube. "Old eyes," she adds, flicking blame to her body, the vessel which bears the tired eyes. Something wrapped in the word "old" disturbs her and her hesitation lengthens. Yet she boosts herself with the optimistic "On, Winnie" (12). The effort gives her the adrenaline, and the courage, to fiddle with the parasol. In this busybody mode she can ignore the past, for the time being.

The possibility/impossibility of the recaptured ideal past flashes again when Winnie eyes the medicine bottle. "Six level...tablespoonfuls daily" she struggles to read. This revelation--certainly nothing new but, remember, Winnie is a remarkable self-deceiver--prompts a head raise, a smile, and the urge to wing a platitude. But she halts just after "The old style!" tumbles out. Once the liquid/verbal elixir cured; now a few drops of sediment hint at a largely drained life. Winnie unwittingly stresses her emptiness

when she blithely tosses the bottle over her shoulder. It apparently conks Willie, another victim of weak spirits. While Winnie refuses to admit that the old style no longer gleams, her canceled smile tells all (13-14). From this junction on, the word "day" or its equivalent will bring a smile, "the old style," and a blank face.

"Memory," Beckett observes in Proust, is "...a clinical laboratory stocked with poison and remedy, stimulant and sedative" (Gontarski Manuscript Study 20). The Happy Days translation is: "In the breakdown of memory a few tenuous wisps of reminiscence struggl[e] to affirm themselves, to implant their bare presence in the rootless air, like the dying gasps of a petering-out human motor clothe[d] in the flesh of a once existent personal culture" (Reavey 1).

Winnie's projections also wound, salve, and almost heal. Firing the "Brownie" revolver, she intuits, can transport her to the heavenly zone of "melting flesh" and 100-hour days. But 100 hours would extend an already hellishly long day. While Winnie doesn't mention the old style, it is suggested for her onlookers. Likewise, Willie's postcard foreplay blanches her musing and ushers in a period when the gun will be unreachable and the "world" will be "without end Amen." (8).

An actress can construct an action map from this central pattern. Locally, the nail file can support, contradict and generally shake the Shower/Cooker yarn: "There floats up (beat)--[file, file: no beat]--into my thoughts [rising

inflection]--[file, file, file: falling inflection]--a Mr. Shower [accent]--[file, file: no accent]..." (41). Overall, Winnie's doubts--mainly about retaining words, sounds and Willie--can be "the syncopated moments, the 'in' moments," the routes for going "out and up" (Fehsenfeld audiotape interview).

Beckett has advised several basic voices for Winnie. She should be loud and pronounced when addressing the semi-deaf Willie; comparatively even-toned and measured in soliloquy; quiet and faltering during breakdowns; heightened and nervous when she is mimicking others (Cohn "Beckett Directs Happy Days" 127). Otherwise, the playwright has instructed, the actress should sound fairly gray, particularly in the second act. "In a word, I am asking here for vocal monotony and relying on speech rhythms and speech-gesture complexes, eyes, switching on and off, smile etc. to do the work" (Letter to Schneider 17 Aug. 1961: Schneider Collection).

But Beckett's commands deny a load of natural color and movement. It is not enough for Mrs. Shower/Cooker to merely natter in Cockney: the actress must natter, zigzag, and saw to be effective. Witness the following passage:

> And you, she says, what's the idea of you, she says, what are you meant to mean? It is because you're still on your two flat feet, with your old ditty full of tinned muck and changes of underwear, dragging me up and down this fornicating wilderness, coarse creature, fit mate...(43).

Beckett's insistence on mildness or blandness would

distort this run-away fiction. Winnie especially needs to sound brilliant because she essentially is covering a debilitating truth: the Shower/Cookers are her and Willie in their formerly mobile, interactive states. "Theatrically, forget it," says Aideen O'Kelly of playing Mrs. Shower/Cooker with an unwavering pure tone in the second act. "Winnie is almost dead, yes, but no one in the audience would stay awake to hear you" (Interview). "If you were completely monotonous, you would make an audience impervious to your story," agrees Sada Thompson. "It's alright if after a while you give the impression of someone with a monotonous *life*, but otherwise..." (Interview).

It must be remembered that on the stage machines, not humans, can produce bull's-eye uniformity. Even a white voice features inherent breaks and overtones: one has to sound semi-musical when repeating Winnie's second-act quasi-lullaby "...just sleep and wake, sleep and wake, as you please, open and close the eyes, as you please" (54). On the other hand, harmonious notes can sound flat projecting from clogged nasal passages and a drone can't halt the vibrations of a lyrical passage. Beckett apparently doesn't admit that no matter how static the delivery, built-in movement will color, will "grin through the wallpaper like distemper" (Whitelaw in Kalb 23).

Even Winnie's nearly robotic banalities can't be entirely whitewashed. A relatively tame Irene Worth exhibited natural color in two choruses of "Wish I had it."

The actress tossed off the first reference because it was housed in a sequence of speech fragments and was bookended by the neutral act of reading the toothbrush inscription. Her second reading of the same line was more forceful and less parenthetical because the line opened a sentence and because it was meant to cheer up rather than inform. Worth demonstrated that Winnie's mood had darkened since the first mention of "marvellous gift." Now "woe" and "...hellish light" were beginning to seep into her hand and mouth, causing her to cancel her smile for the first time and lower the spectacles to center herself (HD/Serban videotape 1979).

For that matter, Beckett regulars insist that he permits slight variations in refrains. Bud Thorpe hypothesizes that Willie's first "Wanted bright boy" could be pitched high, like a violin. The next time it could vibrate lower, like a cello; the third time like a bassoon, and so on. When one works under Beckett, says the actor/director/designer, one is "more concerned about clarity of pitch than clarity of tone. You want the people in the audience to establish your mood for you" (Interview).

Even those who copy Beckett's monotone can't help but embroider. Like many Dublin-area natives, the playwright accents in surprising places. O'Kelly claims that "Sam" and his fellow Foxrockians tend to unglue and make ethereal hard final consonants. "Stopped," she notes, sounds like "stop-eht" or "stop-iht" (Interview). "It's a combination of 'th' and 't,'" notes Fehsenfeld, "with the tongue at the back of

the teeth instead of between" (Audiotape interview). "It's a way of hanging the word on the air and also of treating the word as if it were something new, not something familiar...something else which suddenly appears," explains David Warrilow. "It's not quite knowing what it is or where it's come from" (Interview). This untethered quality matches Winnie's actual and imagined physical dissolution, and her desire to drape herself in a sky robe.

Beckett and his vocal imitators also elongate vowels and squeeze neighboring consonants. Fehsenfeld, who listened to the author/director and Whitelaw during 1979 rehearsals of Happy Days, extended "stones" into "stooonnnzzz" and "I call to the eye of the mind" into "Aye caaalll to they eeeyy of they miiinndd" (Audiotape). O'Kelly, a native of the Dublin suburb of Dalkey, repeated Beckett's reading of the "tone" of "Mr. John-stone" as "t-ah-nn." Expansion and contraction, she notes, was rooted more in social customs than Beckett's plus/minus scheme of enunciation. This "was a class thing," a badge of "Irish upperosity," an example of Winnie putting on airs and tightening her esophagus and, by extension, her mind (Interview).

Whitelaw has mentioned that Beckett likes words broken into syllables (Zurbrugg 110). Dividing and spreading can create a new seesaw: "Gah-dot," says Thorpe, flows on the first syllable and chops on the second (Interview). This process can build a new word, a new meaning, a new urgency: in Rockaby Whitelaw turned "rocker" into "rock-her"

(Zurbrugg 110).[26] It can alienate an almost recognizable message: Regis Outin, Thorpe and John Leighton were among the Willies who tiptongued on "for-mi-ca-tion," the better to prick Winnie's inaccurate, disbelieving ears and to intensify the irony (Winnie after all, is the best enunciator in the family).

Hyphenating can also balance syllables, which the Irish/French Beckett does naturally in conversation. Worth's "Char-lie Hun-ter" sounded like Winnie weighing an important memory, not just a scrap. The actress virtually time-traveled when she said it, giving a romantic sigh. By halving "cannot," Worth also invigorated a staid word, allowing Winnie to predict victory while sensing defeat, to smile through gritted teeth (HD/Serban videotape 1979).

Summarizing the musicality of monotone is necessary. Filtered through a Dublin-area accent, Beckett's vocal tips brim with lyricism, the arch-enemy of monotony. The tone is light and flouncy, the rhythms syncopated, the inflections asymmetrical, the equation balanced almost as an afterthought. This airiness improves whenever the actress visits quick passages with run-on phrases (commas in place of periods, for example), staccato phrases (periods in place of words) and loops (pauses and hyphens instead of commas, periods, and words).

Hearing Beckett doesn't always guarantee a reliable Irish accent. During rehearsals for a 1974 Liverpool tryout, Beckett's reading persuaded Peggy Ashcroft and Peter

Hall that Winnie's voice should be "more incantatory, more legato" than the actress' "natural explosive emphases." But veering overnight "destroyed all her inflexion patterns...and her memory was affected" (Hall 133). The next year, with Happy Days at the Lyttelton Theatre in London, a reviewer insisted Ashcroft was still laboring:

> She flattened and deadened her voice in an attempt to convey an Irish accent--not a strong Irish accent, but, much more difficult for a non-Irish woman, the suggestion of one. A "non-accent" accent resulted, with Dame Peggy's superb voice not merely out of tune but restricted in its range, as though strait-jacketed. Thus Winnie's fluctuations of mood, so deeply moving in Madeleine Renaud's performance, were dulled and Act 1 seemed to lack impact (Pountney 101).

Unlike Ashcroft, Worth didn't hear Beckett during practices. But the performer nevertheless vocalized several Beckettian devices successfully. The Nebraska native stretched vowels and vised consonants to the breaking point: "gooollldnn"; "wooommmbb"; "mooonnnn"; "wi-illdd." On each of these words, her accent was more aristocratic English than fake-airs Irish; unlike Ashcroft, Worth stuck with her onstage, and offstage, vocals, which were predominantly fluty and polished. She did fall into the cheery, Irish-sounding " 'ave anuthrr go Willie, ay'll chair yuh ahn" shortly after George Voskovec's first aborted climb (HD/Serban videotape 1979).[27]

In short, Beckett regulars use his readings as a guide, not law. Despite respect bordering on awe, actresses have called the author's bluff. At their reading O'Kelly deduced

that the playwright was "playing games" from observing the "devilish" glint in his eyes after he had recited "If the miiinnndd were to goooo...". She believes he was testing the perception, as well as the spunk, of a stranger about to try Winnie for the first time. Refusing to be a "parrot," O'Kelly in performance instilled "whimsy" rather than melodrama into the phrase (Interview).

Beckett has recommended that actresses almost chant Winnie's literary quotes. Whitelaw intoned the excerpts as if they were separate from Winnie's normal speaking patterns. The actress made them as treasured and as alien as Winnie's bag, which, by the way, she regarded "like a consumer" (Cohn Just Play 248). Worth lifted the excerpts with an actorly hauteur, a playfulness, "a touch of asperity and...little conviction" (Shout 145). A wispy sigh, rather than desperation or nostalgia, accompanied "One loses one's classics" (57; HD/Serban videotape 1979).

O'Kelly followed a third avenue. According to the actress, Winnie's snippets bubble up involuntarily. So she treated the wistful "...when I was young and...foolish" (34) as a fragment from a long-forgotten recollection of Yeats' "Down by the Sully Gardens." Winnie's imperfect memory for lines, says O'Kelly, is quite common in Irish life: in many middle-class households ringing Dublin, a passion for classics and literary heritage counts more than accuracy. "The Irish have a wild knowledge of opera," explains O'Kelly, indicating that a wedge of "Home from the

Mountains" from Il Trovatore appears in Sean O'Casey's Juno and the Paycock (Interview). "That is what I find so wonderful," admits the very Irish, middle-class Winnie without a trace of surprise, "a part remains, of one's classics, to help one through the day" (58).

O'Kelly and other faithful interpreters occasionally loosen Beckett's vocal screws. One can appear to wear only so many fasteners; with too many, an audience may feel uncomfortably restricted. As Beckett is not an actor, he may not realize that spectators occasionally need the relief of asymmetry. An unusual stress will stir the ear, and may make a monotone more listenable and potent. As Hall has pointed out:

> [T]he slightest sign of feeling disturbs Sam, and he speaks of his need for monotony, paleness, weakness. This is where...he is not finally a theatre worker, great director though he can be. He confuses the work process with the result...A writer of his meticulousness must achieve the phrase he wants very quickly as he sets it down on paper, otherwise he crosses it out. But an actor takes weeks of work to explore and then realise a few minutes of text (Hall 127).

VII.B. Building a Character from Behavioral Clues

Beckett offers many tips for speaking, far fewer for interpreting Winnie's condition or behavior. Why, for example, is she buried? No Dantesque purgatory is mentioned; Winnie and Willie's crimes, if any, must be imagined. There is no hint that a nuclear explosion has deposited a cocoon of scorched earth and grass tufts around Winnie and that the scalding sun has baked it into a rock-

like plateau. In Beckett's early drafts of **Happy Days**, Willie flashed a bulletin about a rocket ship crashing in Pomona (California?), allegedly killing "several thousand" and sparing only a female bathroom worker. Is Winnie the lone survivor? If so, how does Willie figure? Could he be one of the 83 priests reportedly saved? (Gontarski Manuscript Study 40).[28]

Cause and effect may or may not be bedfellows in this environment. Since Willie remains hidden after Winnie strikes with the parasol butt, it is impossible to know if he cries because his skull has been dented. What fuels the bodies of Winnie and Willie? Liquid appears only in Winnie's bottle (and that is quickly downed), observations (Winnie says she perspires less despite higher temperatures--35), descriptions of mental movement (thoughts "bob up," "float up," "bubble up"), memories ("...the lake...reeds"--53). The only food appears to be Willie's snot, a "delicacy" whose consumption prompts Winnie to scold: "Oh, Willie, you're not eating it! Spit it out, dear, spit it out!" (42).

This placelessness demands a kind of faith from producers. "I accept Winnie's dominating presence in the mound, the literal absence of legs in the first act and of anything below the neck in the second, as I accept Picasso's lady with several faces or Dali's bent watch" (Schneider "Waiting for Beckett" 247-48). Winnie's prison, in other words, is literally her habits, her sadsack mementos, her

stillborn marriage, her deteriorating mind and body, her grave existence in an indifferent universe. Beckett refuses to play mystery writer. "The text as is, the words as is, that's all I know," he once wrote. "The rest is Ibsen" (Schneider "Waiting for Beckett" 246).

But actors snoop. Generally, the stingier the information, the more they investigate, confirm, rationalize. From allusions, stylizations and abstractions, Happy Days performers have built, and concealed, very recognizable, traceable characters. They have applied clay to Beckett's skeleton.

Constructing Winnie's flow chart begins with an understanding of the concept of time. "There is no more day in the old sense because there is no more night, i.e. nothing but day," Beckett has indicated. "['The old style'] is in a way an apologetic smile for speaking in a style no longer valid" (Letter to Schneider 13 July 1961: Schneider Collection). Winnie splinters her day into tiny particles so that she will always have something to do between the bells; she stores these tidbits because she doesn't want to permanently unhinge her internal seesaw. So sweaty and dry palms double as platforms for metaphysical blurbs. Deciphering the toothbrush inscription takes several readings. Shortly after "genuine pure hog's setae" has been placed under her lamp of speech, Winnie tricks herself into missing the definition of a hog, the better to milk a routine. Conventional tasks are forgotten and later

overwhelmingly remembered: "My hair!...Did I brush and comb my hair?...I may have done...Normally I do" (22). Each of Winnie's hands touch only certain objects. Turns come in quarters, halves, three quarters--and other fractions organized by actress and director. Grass is plucked for diversions and answers. In Beckett's 1979 production, Billie Whitelaw's fingertips, rather than palms, applauded Willie's attempt to sing, a display of energy conserved and decorum preserved (Knowlson 141). Here, as in other Beckettian black holes, "everything you do makes you what you are...everything you do has consequences, especially unexpected ones. Yo pay for what you get and you get what you pay for" (Schneider Cockefair lecture: Schneider Papers).

Winnie is a champion saver of time's detritus. She breaks super-objectives into more digestible aims. Surviving the day, pleasantly, depends in part on several intervals of The Merry Widow waltz duet. Winnie's first "I Love You So" reference is merely flinging her yearning to sing. Here, early in the first act, she doesn't really need a musical pick-me-up (24). The second allusion arrives at midpoint, with "the day...well advanced," yet not so far gone to vocalize confidently, without fear of petering out (32). Reference No. 3 is more dramatic. Winnie, at low tide, needs to hear the music box play her tune, even if the melody sounds tinny. Willie's singing boosts her to cheerlead but he stops abruptly: he needs to save his jizz,

too (40). Pessimism creeps into the second act when Winnie admits that "to sing too soon is fatal" (56). Later, when she is trying to forget her Milly story, she chooses a portion of a Charles Wolfe poem which reminds her about singing in general (57). "Sing...Sing your old song, Winnie," the final reference, arises from a desperate attempt to repress the thought that her "golden day" no longer exists, even in memory (60). The actual singing of "I Love You So" only preserves her longtime status as a "merry widow" (64).

Winnie needs company. Willie offers only gutturals, stale news items, one-syllable answers, occasional peeks at his body. So she invents ways to animate him, to dissolve their "ossified mound of Venus" (Tallmer 1961). Winnie's tools are as erratic and finicky as her mind. She coos to wake up Willie to play ("Hoo-oo!" 11). When the gentle approach doesn't work, she attacks with fussiness ("The lid!" 25). She splits hairs over "them or it" to prod him into pseudo-scientific discourse (23). She turns coquette to arouse his lust, or aesthetic judgment, or sympathy ("...when I was young and...foolish and...beautiful" 34). She issues helpful commands to put on hat and "Slip on drawers, dear, before you get singed" (14). She even leans back so he can get a first-class look at her (28). "Winnie is attacking Willie with other times, her past affairs, her femininity, trying to get him to abandon his private 'hole' and pay court to her" (Bermel 123).

Resourcefulness is one of Winnie's specialties. She scolds Willie's awkwardness ("Not head first, stupid, how are you going to turn?") and promptly soothes his frayed nerves ("Oh I know it is not easy, dear, crawling backwards, but it is rewarding in the end" 25). She mocks him as a potential suicide and whinnying suitor, yet she inserts some of his calmer traits into unnervingly unfamiliar characters (Mr. Johnstone, Mr. Shower/Cooker, Milly). She sanctions his silences ("...just to feel you there within earshot and conceivably on the *qui vive* is all I ask..." 27), yet she imagines the "cries in my head" are his (56). Humorous goads are thrown when Willie finally pays court: "What were you doing all this time?...Changing?" (62); "Where are the flowers?" (61); "You were always in dire need of a hand..." (63). Winnie is always terrified that her partner doesn't exist because non-existence would mean a large part of her verbal self has died. "I need to continue to assert my own existence, therefore you, Willie, still exist" is the unspoken rationale for plaguing her fellow castaway (Knowlson Happy Days/Oh! Les Beaux Jours 113). His presence, behind the mound and/or in her imagination, helps her avoid the void of no words and no sounds.

Actresses have fleshed out and connected these attempts to stimulate and reaffirm. In her 1971 French television production, Madeleine Renaud turned to the audience on the phrase "asking for the moon," as if the unseen spectators could help her convince Willie/Regis Outin to answer her

more often and less snidely (HD videotape 1971). Aideen O'Kelly's responses to the hidden prop master were alternately directed at the auditorium of the Samuel Beckett Theater and John Leighton/Willie (Interview).

Fehsenfeld broke Winnie's super-objectives and goals into actions and beats. Then she categorized them "from the most insinuating to the most obvious. The more specific the action, the more specific the beat...The goal was to get closer to the precise result, to work toward that specific result" (Audiotape interview). "If I picked up the wrong color string," she adds, "I restrung and braided three or four colors to get back to the right color--to give the illusion that I was swimming instead of drowning" (Interview).

Some performers have justified Winnie's behavior outside the text. "[The play is] about needing someone else, even if only to shout at," Whitelaw has pointed out. "How many marriages do we know like that? And how many people?" (Cooke 32). Like Winnie, "I do speak to myself a lot," notes Fehsenfeld. "It's very customary, very tempting to speak to yourself, when one lives alone--for company" (Audiotape interview). O'Kelly's Mrs. Shower/Cooker and, to a lesser extent, Winnie, echoed "self-styled upper class" matrons the actress had known in and around Dalkey. According to O'Kelly, these women virtually entombed themselves within a social sphere revolving around delusions of grandeur. The "right" parish (where religion was more a

matter of "social structure" than "deep belief"), drinking the "right" dry sherry in the "right" public place (a hotel bar, never a pub), mixing with the "right" people--these rites helped numb the pain of ruptured expectations. "You were very careful about what you did; it was very important that your status was preserved," says O'Kelly, whose mother lives in Beckett's Foxrock. "My mother looked for weak points, although not in a mean way. It was ultra-respectability, upperosity" (Interview).

Winnifred Mann also grounded Winnie in a suppressive/repressive milieu. "She was of the class, era and gender unaccustomed to rebelling," claims the performer. "Act like everything is fine and everything will turn out right. Very British. I established several moods within this framework:

> (1) Chirpy, cheerful, stiff upper lip, almost always acting for the benefit of the "entity" and for Willie and for herself. (2) Sentimental melancholy for the past, lost youth, romanticized memories. (3) Deep despair, that showed very rarely but was never expressed openly, even when the chirpy cheeriness was just below the surface. (3-1/2) Time-serving mode, pondering gravity, spontaneous combustion: passing the time between bells. All of the activity and chatter is designed to keep herself from wondering how much longer for the bell for sleep.

"I never wondered why she didn't ask Willie to dig her out," Mann continues. "Certain things are *verboten*--they may offend Willie or the entity. Winnie probably thinks she's being punished for some unknown or unremembered transgression" (Interview).[29]

To naturalize Winnie, actresses have borrowed and adapted mannerisms from their own lives. Ruth White lifted from an aunt who smiled and chirped through family crises (her parents, for example, scorned her for marrying a non-Catholic and she raised three kids as a widow). The relative's active hands--exercised by selling bags at a department store--helped color Winnie's gestures (White interview). White's earthy yet elegant portrait tipped Irene Worth, as did the philosophy of a dying friend: "Well, we musn't complain...we're in God's hands" (Gussow 1979 C10).

"My mother was a very repressed Victorian lady with lots of problems," recalls Angela Paton. "She was certainly very courageous but enslaved by habit and ritual." "That was a good cup of tea" was one of her recurring banalities. "My father was a sea captain," the actress adds. "Once he married my mother, he was never able to go to sea again. He was a taciturn, gentle, lovely man. But he missed the freedom of the ocean" (Interview). The first names of Paton's parents? Winnifred and William.

Not every performer goes so far afield in search of clues. Everyone, it seems, has had extended periods of being scatterbrained, preoccupied, self-disruptive. "Winnie is frightfully busy doing nothing," Whitelaw has noted, "the way I feel I am a lot of the time" (Cooke 32). "I had to accept that there's me in there," notes Barbara Bain (Interview). Says Paton: "Winnie is me" (Interview).

Physical environment conditions Winnie. The baking sun and sauna-like mound help cause her migraines, especially since her hat and parasol offer little protection. Being compressed for a long period of time helps fatigue her lower muscles. Winnie compensates by making her upper torso exceptionally busy, relieving numbness by wiping her hands on the mound, attempting to push off, overhandling props. Yet these gymnastics also help wear her down. Bending back so that Willie can catch a glimpse is too much for her; as she complains, "The earth is very tight today" (28). Lack of food and drink also undermines her exercise. Despite her self-corrections, she doesn't always pace herself well. If her mound/mind were a crystal ball, she might store her hyperkinetics for the second act, when she really needs the ammunition.

Willie's deafness is only one reason why Winnie speaks loudly and persistently. She must overcome the cries obscuring her thoughts. Perhaps she is paranoid; perhaps she is manic depressive; perhaps she has Alzeimer's Disease. "The brain is struggling to articulate," notes Bain, who played a stroke victim in Arthur Kopit's play "Wings" before she became Winnie. "It finds its own conversation with itself. There are broken words which don't seem related but which I didn't find unrelated. After a while, it didn't seem so different to get from here to there" (Interview).

"All I can say for my part is" (59), then, goes beyond

Beckett recreating off-the-cuff speech/thought or Winnie trying to block the encroaching verbal wilderness. Too many confusing signals, plus a fear of running out of tongue and time, force the character to jam unnecessary words into sentences. "When you're desperate you get the effect of the short sentences, the spurts, the showers of words," indicates Fehsenfeld. "Then you don't talk as much because everything is more important" (Audiotape interview).

But erecting motivations with only a handful of textual clues can be tricky. Each of Winnie's actions has multiple determinants; each response carries many frequencies; Winnie and her environment can't be pigeonholed. The ever-squeezing heap frees her imagination *and* enfeebles her body. The fireball fries her mind but makes her sweat less. She may automatically cancel her smile when she utters "day" or "the old style" but she has 1,001 ways of provoking Willie. At times Winnie may be addressing the inscrutable universe and not her spouse: to energize, direct and center her character, Mann shot "My Willie!" (51) and "My neck is hurting me" (60) at her invisible tormentor, which she visualized as being "just above the last row of seats...For me, 'Hail, holy light' (49) was deeply sarcastic but successfully covered, suppressed. I did not want to offend this entity" (Interview).

Winnie may have said "marvellous gift" a million times but each rendition is twisted to make it feel fresh and believable. She understands the irony of "Ah earth you old

extinguisher" but doesn't quite catch the fact that her blessed quotes concern fleeting joys and lasting woes. The "bird with oil on its feathers" alternates as thrush, seagull, flamingo, ostrich; sometimes her feathers are coated with grease, sometimes merely dappled with oil. Winnie is Everywoman, "the great mother of us all--young, old and ageless" (Reavey 1).

The performer would do best to carefully mold a realistic character and then strain many of the findings into her subconscious. Just as Winnie prevents dips into her bag, the actress should deny the spoken, alluded and extracted forces which condition her interpretation. She should study, for example, the two basic views of Winnie's awareness: "She's not aware, she's stoic" (Beckett in Knowlson 24) and "She's acutely aware--more so than any Beckett character--of her dual role as actor and spectator. This awareness makes her doubt her own reality" (Schneider lecture notecards: Schneider Papers). Then she should fold this personal uncertainty into the performance. Or she could drain Winnie's early-draft life as the only "female lavatory attendant spared" into unconscious relief, hope, decay, doubt. The result should be an onstage mixup which psychologically fits Beckett's transfer of Winnie from center to left of mound.

Given these suggestions, a few important tips can now be qualified. "...[T]he Winnie actor must not fill in those emotional moments that Beckett's character finds void..."

(Lyons and Becker 297). More accurately, the player should plug these moments and then empty them, imitating Winnie the memory decanter. The actress "must play the absence of failure of memory and the terror that failure produces...the actor builds and destroys the image of a character conscious of history" (Lyons and Becker 297-98). Rather, keep the awareness in the back pocket, for this reserve will deepen Winnie's sorrow and counterpoint her inattentiveness. The actress should memorize the complete, accurate excerpts of Winnie's classics, then forget them in bits and chunks, as Winnie does. She should know that Winnie's reaction to a sudden reunion with the revolver, "You again!" (33), is Beckett's physicalization of "...you/Beside me once again!" from Browning's "uppermost" poem "Paracelcus" (Knowlson 149). In the end, she should walk Renaud's tightrope: as a reviewer noted, "She does not seem absurd. She makes her condition seem absurd (Kerr 1965: 16). In short, the animator should "work backwards from [Beckett's] notation to the meaning of his text. [She] must feel *but not show it*. If [her] feeling is right, the audience will receive it telepathically" (Hall in Pountney 102).

Winnie encrusts herself with routines, memories, "stuff." Her interpreter must sift among the junk, pick the grimiest items, polish them, assemble another heap, knock it down, and save a few choice pieces.

VII.C. Pinning Causes on Willie's (Lack of) Actions

"Winnie's action is to get through the day pleasantly.

Willie's is to stay out of it" (Schneider letter to Cronyn 1972: Schneider Papers). Winnie yearns to join the sky of weightlessness and unconsciousness; Willie is content to grovel in the muck of forgetting. Without reveries, he is not disappointed. With a poor vocabulary, he doesn't fear losing words. Loneliness matters little because he depends on no one's absence or presence. The past exists for him only as a mouthful of news blurbs, a worn-out postcard, a few timeless and time-consuming chores. Because Willie ignores the fact that he is a cosmic pinball, he does not richochet. Apparently wounded by Winnie's parasol, he merely hands it back. He speaks of no "great mercies," offers no smile (and hence no vanishing smile), doesn't perform narrative jumps. He wears an almost impenetrable shell of his own creation. Call him an ancient tortoise.

But Willie's armor cracks occasionally. A curled-up posture dents his body. Groans and slow movements are his vain attempts to overcome entropy and atrophy. Dragging around the abrasive mound in the brutal sun damages him further. Hoisting the paper, arguing, thinking--virtually every function winds him down. He needs his "straw," his shelter, his winks to keep going. He requires the child-like Winnie to guide his doddering.

Subtext lurks in Winnie's admiration of her partner's "marvellous gift." She treasures his indifference--"the most formidable weapon against the Absurd" (Coe 107). She appreciates his ability to "laugh...wild amid severest woe"

(31). She manages to hide her envy of his mobility. A touch of nostalgia and jealousy motivates her attempts to awaken the buyer of her glistening but unattainable past.

Martin Beck crafted an elementary pre-history for Winnie's hypothetical other. His outline was not nearly as exact as those of his partners, Barbara Bain and Angela Paton, but then Willie is a "brute beast" (18). For many years, theorizes the actor, Willie has resented abandoning a sea captain's life (remember that Paton's mother coaxed her father to leave his maritime career for an ossified shore). So he strives to unsettle Winnie with stale "titbits," vivid newsprint snaps and lewdness. Willie may be autoerotic but he also realizes that Winnie turns crimson at the hint of perversity. His postcard doubles as a quasi-Penthouse magazine--with an image of tangled primal lovers but without the investigative articles--and his fiddling with it bisects Winnie's musing "hardly a day goes by without some addition to one's knowledge..." (18) and delays her vision of a future nether-land. "Formication" is designed to ruffle her delicate ears, or feathers, Willie chuckling for a far different reason than Winnie. "It's a wonderful opportunity for him to get her," Beck claims. "He wants to shock her. 'You mean fornication?' is what Winnie is saying. Willie through his intellect is trying to blow her mind..." (Interview).

Winnie occasionally plays into Willie's best hand. She unwittingly approves his masturbation when she claims: "Oh,

I see you still have some of that stuff left," alluding to Willie's liniment. "Work it well in, dear...Now the other" (14), she continues, sanctioning the rubbing of his testicles or buttocks. Willie changes Winnie's "sucked up," a gossamer ideal of leaving the mortal coil, into a case of oral fixation. He repeats the phrase with a question because he is surprised: he expected to hear "fucked up" (Beckett letter to Schneider 17 Aug. 1961: Schneider Collection).

Retaliation is not always Willie's through-line. He does end his newspaper fanning in order to hear if Winnie can finish deciphering the toothbrush inscription. "Eggs" is his relatively sporting answer to Winnie's bald assertion: "Like a little white ball" (30). Winnie pleads with him for a one-fingered message to prove that he lives and hears; his bonus is three additional digits (37). He yelps "I Love You So," defines "hog," actualizes her dream of semi-mobility. At least he is of some use. And like his co-player, Willie occasionally misses the fact that he is the victim of a cosmic joke. "Who would want a 'bright boy'?" asks Beck. "Look where they are; they can't use one" (Interview). Sexual innuendo he seizes, but not the reality that he is a "Castrated male swine...Reared for slaughter" (47).

Of the four Willies interviewed, only two adopted traits from real individuals. Beck occasionally inserted the labored movements and heavy, asymmetrical breathing of

senior citizens (Interview). Bud Thorpe modeled Willie's mustache-grooming right hand after Beckett's severely twisted hands. He bent the fingers, stretched the webbing between index and middle digits, then wedged the "V" onto his lip hair(s). He recreated how he maneuvered his fingers into the playwright's handshake, his straight digits mingling with tendons so knotted that the second and third fingers jut out. When Thorpe needed to feel physical decline, he remembered that Beckett had loaned Winnie some of his ailments, including poor eyesight. Given another chance at the character, he says he would eschew a bald hairpiece; he claims it looked more artificial than a shaved head would have (Interview).

Repeated tasks generally give the actor a needed sense of place and order. Like Winnie, Willie runs on triplets. He adjusts his handkerchief and boater three times; cries three times (twice when apparently hit by the parasol, once after reportedly being assaulted by the medicine bottle); blows his nose three times; shortcircuits Winnie's hat raising three times. Practically, these rituals allow the character and performer to pace and exercise. Thematically, they indicate that the cosmic wheel must rotate for even the most alienated indifferent individual.

The Winnie actress builds, pulls apart, and reassembles her character's behavioral mosaic. Since Willie raids his past unemotionally, his interpreter tends to leave shards of motivation strewn over the mound or drifting in air. These are usually collected and united by his partner.[30]

CHAPTER 8

BURROWING INSIDE ACT I

VIII.A. Winnie: Sidestepping Giddiness

Ensign crimson," or "crimson defiance" (Sunday Times [London]: 16 March 1975), rules the first act of Happy Days. Here is the play Beckett once subtitled a "low comedy" (Gontarski Manuscript Study 47). There are visual gags like the parasol club, its loss and meek return. The comedy of hypocrisy occurs when Winnie immediately ignores her advice to "...not overdo the bag..." (32) and "There is so little one *can* do...One does it all...All one can" (22). "Would I had let you sleep on" (20) is her comic understatement that prematurely rousing an ornery spouse has its drawbacks. Miscommunication depends on the hearing exam and the lurching laughs over "formication." And of course discontinuity breeds a kind of nervous laughter: Winnie's refuge is collapsing around and pinning her, yet here she is, glorifying monosyllabic, tardy answers.

Intermittent, vague awareness directs Winnie in the first half. Qualifiers are her bread and butter: "Wouldn't miss it...or would I?" (11); "no pain...hardly any...slight headache sometimes...occasional mild migraine" (11). Yet these are more routines than revelations. Winnie understands that her props can act without her commands. "The sunshade will be there again tomorrow, beside me on this mound, to help me through the day," she says

perceptively. "...I take up this little glass, I shiver it on a stone--(does so)--I throw it away--(does so far behind her)--it will be in the bag again tomorrow, without a scratch, to help me through the day" (39). But she doesn't yet recognize that the cosmic entity controls her.

Low comedy shadows Winnie and Willie's longest bout of (mis)communication. A crestfallen Winnie asks "for the moon," echoing her wish for long, moonish days. What she gets for her troubles is an emmet. Her instant preoccupation with this new diversion suggests the creation of yet another new pattern to amuse herself or to prompt Willie. In either case the underlying message could be: Hooray, here's a mascot/child I can adopt. Willie shakes off his lethargy long enough to utter "Eggs" and "Formication." Jovial thoughts of crawling ants cement their renewed alliance of the mind. But the hollow tone of the laughs hints that something's amiss. Score a victory for Winnie when she notes that different sources may have produced the laughter. Rack up a loss because she misses Willie's lasciviousness (31). Winnie's second illumination is asking: "How can one better magnify the Almighty than by sniggering with him at his little jokes, particularly the poorer ones?" (31). Her second omission is failing to add herself and Willie to this lowly species. Once Winnie predicted that catastrophe would coax at least a "brief...gale of laughter should I happen to see the old joke again" (21). Now the joke is upon her and she bypasses

the punch line.

Breakdown, uplift, plateau: Winnie finds what may be a meaty bone, discovers it is dry and brittle, brews soup anyway. She is pathetically heroic, heroically pathetic. "If she's aware, then she's lost," reasons Martha Fehsenfeld. "Persistently determined awareness is her kind of stoicism" (Audiotape interview).

The actress may be tempted to be overwhelmingly larkish in the first half. After all, Winnie tries out many reveries, fluttery voices, lively gestures, smart choreographic moves. But the character should also physically wrestle, the better to fuse her unaware predictions of second-half life ("And should one day the earth cover my breasts, then I shall never have seen my breasts, no one ever seen my breasts" 38) and realized prophecies in the second act (Yes, her breasts are covered). The performer must darken the light half so that it mixes more easily and thoroughly with the gloomier act. As Beckett has suggested, Winnie should "...not be so able to take command in the first act because in the second act she is nearly gone" (O'Casey in Harty 34). One must remember that fragility exposes strength and weakness frames lack of fragility.

Madeleine Renaud perhaps has been scolded for too much cheeriness more than any other Winnie. Reviewing a 1969 London performance, Irving Wardle insisted that by overstressing the character's civility and actorliness, she

ignored the "emblem of middle-class decorum holding the sense of chaos and despair at will by reliance upon a fixed code of good manners and regular habits" (Knowlson Happy Days/Oh! Les Beaux Jours 124). "Renaud was perhaps too consciously lyrical and sentimental," adds another observer. "She did not fully reflect the growing terror and desperation of the second act. As a result, this act seemed too much like a replay of the first" (Knowlson Happy Days/Oh! Les Beaux Jours 98).[31]

Martha Fehsenfeld recalls that practicing in a comfortable chair seduced her into making Winnie look too graceful in the first act. After watching her in a 1983 Manhattan performance, director Alan Schneider claimed "it was too easy for her to get to Willie. He said it should be more difficult, more comfortable. I turned too easily." Next time, she vows, she will irritate herself more and overcome her aggravation before the run. "Billie [Whitelaw] fought for this comfort, this sense of stability, this sense of tranquility, and this charged her performance" (Audiotape interview).

Fehsenfeld did inflate Winnie's mobility in the first act. "I would lean into the space, using it as fully as I possibly could within the restriction of the mound, knowing that the audience would have to have the memory of the moment...in the second act" (Audiotape interview). Her exaggeration satisfied Beckett's command that "...all this leaning and turning and motion of arms and bust in Act I

should be as ample and graceful (memorable) as possible, in order that its absence [in] Act II may have maximum effect. Hope your girl [then Ruth White] has desirable fleshiness. Audience throughout Act I should miss the gleaming opulent flesh--gone" (Letter to Schneider 17 Aug. 1961: Schneider Collection).

Textually, it makes sense for the actress to restrain Winnie in the first half. When besieged, the character instinctively closes her tent. The bag earns longer looks; the "claws" get filed; the mantras float; pauses, ellipses and hyphens proliferate. These devices form Winnie's fulcrums, the secure, stable midpoints between ecstasy and depression. Winnie instinctively knows that "when no further pains are possible (in pursuit of information) one has only to sit tight and lost knowledge will come back with the mind" (Beckett letter to Schneider 17 Aug. 1961: Schneider Collection). Spacing out should also improve spectator attention. After hearing so many words and witnessing so much finicky movement, viewers may welcome a little quiet and stillness. In fact, they may begin to anticipate and look forward to Winnie's solutions. Thus groomed, they may begin to wish for more of Winnie's short, artful first-act rests in the second half. More first-half halts will make the second-act retreats appear longer and more terrifying.

Practically, the Winnie interpreter must reserve energy in the first act in order to ascend the second act's

daunting peaks and valleys. One cannot rely exclusively on an intermission recharge for the necessary firepower to express only with neck, spine, voice, face--especially if one also has to nurse an arthritic hip or claustrophobic streak. "Something says, Stop talking now, Winnie, for a minute, don't squander all your words for the day, stop talking and do something for a change, will you?" (40-41). Channeling this peacefulness throughout the body will help ensure health and sanity in Act Two.

The actress must know that in the first half Winnie only sporadically locks into a "happy daze of...pernicious and incurable optimism" (Carey 149). The improvised prayer, "Blessed are the optimists, for they shall be buried alive" (Alvarez 110), doesn't describe all of her ups and downs. Other forces imprison her; other dynamics liberate her.

VIII.B. Willie: Revenge, Cheap Thrills, and the Dangers of Too Much Drowsiness

What happens in Willie's first-act "dubious anal region" (Brook 35), his "sewer pipe of scrabbled earth" (Reavey 2)? Performers agree that he commonly tries to silence Winnie. Martin Beck issued a gentle "Wanted bright boy" in an attempt to nudge Winnie toward his brand of terse, noncommital conversation. "It was an interesting want ad Willie had come across," he points out (Interview). John Leighton was slightly edgier, taunting Aideen O'Kelly in "an old-boy, Colonel Blimp kind of way, somewhat dictatorial" (Interview). Wyman Pendleton employed several intensities

of newsprint snaps, each projecting a different code. His attacks arose more from errant communication than revenge, his topics so ancient and his hearing so weak that Winnie didn't always understand the messages. He was a minor irritant, a less biting version of the bells or the divine stage manager, a programmed companion to the unscheduled flying insects which have visited Happy Days sets. "I can't remember feeling terrible hostility," recalls Sada Thompson, Pendleton's 1968 partner. "It was more a baffled kind of relationship: people who have kind of grown away from each other and don't even know why" (Interview).

Each of the Willies interviewed longed for a cheap, quick rush of sexual potency. Soon after Irene Worth advised him to rub in the vaseline, George Voskovec heaved his shoulders in feigned masturbation (HD/Serban videotape 1979). Pendleton's mime was tamer, broader, more stylized: the actor didn't want to offend those watching from the side boxes and the mezzanine of the Billy Rose Theater on Broadway (Interview). Leighton checked his crotch after O'Kelly had asked if "hair" was singular or plural. When she delivered the qualifier, "No, the hair on your head," he craned his neck as quickly as O'Kelly had been uprooted from her toolshed dream. The subtext of "*Sucked* up?" had knifed through the surface. "I said it very sexually and sensually. Very sucked up, hopefully" (Interview).

Bud Thorpe occasionally faked slumber and deafness so that he could avoid and/or annoy his persecutor

(Interview). Beck attached Willie's alienation to a day which is duller and possibly more painful than Winnie's. "Willie dozes a lot," explains the actor. "He's living in a hole. He can't watch the six o'clock news. He doesn't have a VCR" (Interview).

Each performer worked to escape the trap of Willie's torpor. Because they worried about missing cues, none daydreamed onstage; none rationalized their character's behavior; none chose an after-show restaurant, etc. Willie did not inhabit a cavity of Winnie's brain for these interpreters. He was a crotchety, elderly Caliban, not a stage manager in Winnie's spontaneous vision play.

What about out-of-sight movements in the first act? Schneider, normally a Beckett medium, told Pendleton he did not have to slither backward into his hole (Pendleton interview). Alan Mandell and Shivaun O'Casey, by comparison, blocked all of Winnie's traffic orders. Beck and Leighton hiked up their "drawers"; removed and applied their "straw"; curled up with chin in hands and knees and tail down; mimed the eating of snot. These movements helped keep them in character, alert, and out of danger.

CHAPTER 9

TUNNELING THROUGH ACT 2

IX.A. Delaying and Diverting the Flood of Grief

Act One ends with a repetition of Willie's news bulletins. The first batch of snippets had prompted light-hearted business--namely, hat-raising interruptions and memories. Now, however, Willie's "Wanted bright boy" freezes Winnie's prayer in mid-clasp. Irene Worth's tears on "Pray your old prayer, Winnie" telegraphed disappointment at being wounded so close to the bell for sleep and prepared character and audience for the exit of a comforting ritual. George Voskovec harrumphed two, rather than three, flashes, each of them softer and feebler than their predecessors. Together, the actors began the accelerating process of unraveling (HD/Serban videotape 1979).

The second half of Happy Days is marked by "pale flag" or "ashen terror" (Sunday Times [London]: 16 March 1975). Winnie's gossamer facade finally tears and bunches up around/on her. The second bell opened her eyes in the first act; now the first ring awakens her. In the first half "Another heavenly day" is trailed by a gaze at the zenith; now "Hail, holy light" brings a long pause and a slow turn toward the center.

Despite the torture of being collared, Winnie glides into a reverie. "Someone looking at me still," she observes. "Caring for me still. (Pause.) That is what I find so wonderful" (49). Perhaps her inquisitor is

consoling her; after all, her first-half voyeur/camera never cared for her. Yet a leveler hides in every Beckettian bonus. Winnie's lens allusion replaces the more soothing ritual of praying. And "...what I find so wonderful" is a mere "falling-back phrase," notes Aideen O'Kelly. "She doesn't find it wonderful; it's just another phrase to keep her going" (Interview). Winnie can't actually see "eyes on my eyes" because she can't arch backwards. The carrot has become a radish again.

Props banished and arms tied, Winnie can only confirm her facial existence by contorting and addressing it. What she invents is mere cataloguing: extending tongue, peeking at a "suspicion of brow," admitting that even puffed-out cheeks can't be viewed (52). While it's not yet compressed-lips time, Winnie is precariously near numbness. Neck fastened and Willie absent, she must remind herself that her partner exists. With upper torso freed, she charged herself by touching props, chest, mound, postcard. Now she can only work out by italicizing words: "My neck is *hurting* me!" (60); "...then you *must* close your eyes--and keep them closed" (59). The bag remains in view, but without glasses it looks blurry. The sunshade has returned, but it contains the pitiful residue of a pristine memory. Now it cues the staggered thought of "...that day...that day...the lake ...the reeds...What day?...What reeds?" (53).

Winnie's creativity fades without the built-in memories and associations of her paraphernalia. The full-bodied

"Brownie" improvisation in Act One becomes, simply, "Brownie is there, Willie" (53). Repeated three times, what was once a mocking of the suicidal Willie is now a plea for him to fire the revolver. In the first act Winnie slid easily from the sun perched "uppermost" in the bag to dreams of embracing the atmosphere. Now she skids from the sunshade sequence to "What would I do without [sounds]?" (53). Her stories come closer to disintegrating. "Beechen green" unfolds in a unified narrative in the first act. In the second it stalls: "...beechen green...this...Charlie... kisses...this...all that...deep trouble for the mind" (51). Winnie once borrowed from such literary heavyweights as Shakespeare, Keats, and Milton; the considerably lesser poet Charles Wolfe is represented in the latter half. As Winnie's resilience declines, so does her taste in classics (Gontarski "Literary Allusions" 313).[32]

The inevitable disappearance of words now consumes Winnie. She must work overtime to convince herself that at least sounds will echo in the netherworld. As if she, or her cosmic supervisor, wants to act this belief, words increasingly bleed into sounds. Winnie clearly falters as she fumbles from "I used to think..." to "...I say I used to think..." to "I used to say...I say I used to say" (59-60). "One does all one can" decays into "One speaks of it all" (50) and "There is so little one can bring up, one brings up all" (60). Neuron by neuron, the void is overtaking Winnie. "To sing too soon," once merely "a great mistake"

(32), is now "fatal" (56). The sparingly used, calming mantra "No no no" is invoked much more frequently and followed more regularly by longer, more unnerving tableaux. "Before and after 'And now?' should be a pause," Beckett has indicated. "Don't be afraid of stillness here. A more dramatic stillness. Your speech has come to an end and you're stuck" (Knowlson 153).

Winnie used to announce the strangeness of her environment with curiosity, wonder, admiration. Now placelessness and timelessness are more confusing: "To have been always what I am--and so changed from what I was" (51). Accelerating time supports her conclusion. The bell rings twice as often (four times versus two) in 30 fewer minutes. "Do you think the earth has lost its atmosphere...?" (51) arrives much sooner than in the first act; the tightening "earthball" is mentioned much faster. Rests are scarcer and breakdowns progressively lengthier (Knowlson 38). Once waited out or teased away, "the old style" lingers tenaciously. Madeleine Renaud emphasized this tightening vise by playing a "...chatterer who knows that only this verbal chatter can stave off the other more terrible chatter of teeth at the approach of annihilation" (Simon 1979: 73).

Too much levity is the actor's nemesis in the first half; a premature overdose of mourning is the danger in the second. Locking into a dejected mode for 30 minutes will bore and alienate most spectators. Instead, the actress

should rummage through Winnie's bagful of small victories. Quotes, albeit less memorable ones, continue to inspire her. "They're signposts along the way; they give comfort," notes Barbara Bain (Interview). Aurals still trigger connections: witness the leap from "...deep trouble for the mind" to "But it does not trouble mine" (51). Even with her verbals corroding, Winnie finds "...they are a boon, sounds are a boon, they help me...through the day" (53). By grasping mentally for her physically unreachable props, she admits that they "have a life," a recognition which exercises her "reason" (54). "Eyes float up that seem to close in peace...to see...in peace" (51) indicates that she can still create and, perhaps more importantly, install herself inside a moving picture of the mind.

At least Winnie can remember her breasts, her Willie. And when the long-lost suitor finally pays court, she zips through a medley of remarkably agile comments. The performer should also remember that Winnie could be in worse straits; at least she can converse, at least her mouth isn't crammed with sand. "In act two you are kept alive by talking. That's all you've got. There's nothing else...," advised director Alan Schneider to his 1972 Winnie, Jessica Tandy. "...You look so sad, so sorry for yourself at the top...you've given up at the start of the act. You're thus preventing the audience from laughing at you" (Rehearsal notes 21 Nov. 1972: Schneider Papers).

Humor still intrudes in the second act, albeit

comparatively abstract, disembodied humor. In the second half, a number of Winnie's premonitions blossom into stagy, even buffoonish, events. Here the "stuff" Winnie never expected to grow covers her upper torso. The thought of "Formication," once a cause for laughs, is now a disarming possibility, with Winnie being defenseless against "swarming (devouring) ants" (Beckett letter to Schneider 13 July 1961: Schneider Collection). Cosmic symmetry is yet another layer of the molehill.

Winnie can't afford to laugh, for fear of offending her grave-tender and diluting the strength of her body. But she refuses or, rather, is denied, the right to melt. An ultra-light, extremely pure "white voice" links her to heaven, earth and hell. Theoretically, this voice summarizes, foretells and compresses all of Winnie's pitches. "I decided that because Winnie was dying, she's almost gone and she's melting in with the universe, becoming part of it," explains Aideen O'Kelly. "The voice melts into, is absorbed by, the universe" (Interview). Or, as Beckett has observed: "In this act the emotionlessness is going to prove the right result. But if there's unbroken monotony it's not going to work. Not too much variety in tone but some still needed. Remember there's plenty of feeling there but her ability to project it has been diminished" (Knowlson 127).

Fehsenfeld used a grounding device to tighten and loosen Winnie. In the first act, the actress had imagined her head as the apex of an imaginary triangle; now the apex was

located at the back of her skull, which was lodged against a brace tucked into the mound aperture. Fehsenfeld directed all signals to this command post. She visualized being balanced on a pinpoint within this region. Whenever Winnie needed to summon extra concentration or vicious reactions ("My Willie!"; "My neck is hurting me!"), Fehsenfeld pressed the rear of her head against the back of the mound opening. Overloading one of the most vulnerable parts of the body weakened and stirred actress and character. This extreme localization efficiently stoked Winnie's few embers, relaxed Fehsenfeld, and connected Winnie the adult with Winnie the infant, the one with "the paper-thin membrane" at the back of her skull. The performer internalized what Winnie had long blocked visually: the vanishing point, "the still point of nothing" (Audiotape interview).

Assaulting the body also has a more external dimension. Billie Whitelaw chilled the second act of Beckett's 1979 production with her white voice, ghastly white make-up and miserly output of smiles (Knowlson 17). Her Winnie seemed especially desperate because her interpreter had been so sexy, so marionette-like, so larkish in the first half. Winnifred Mann welded the arc more smoothly, wearing a thin layer of whiteface in the second act and looking more like a pathetic clown than a ghost (Interview). One almost felt happy that Madeleine Renaud no longer could see the sagging flesh of her arms; on the other hand, one could feel Winnie's first-act physical deterioration by merely glancing

at the jiggling flesh (HD videotape 1971). Ruth White's "round Irish pudding face" (Schneider Entrances 297), a vivid contrast to Renaud's more wrinkled, angular features, made her performance seem more pedestrian, more peasantish. This commonness was trumped up by a household frock and William Ritman's steep, pebbly hillock (Production photos 1961: Schneider Papers).

Winnie at times parallels two eras of physicality: when she was "lovely to look at" and when she owns only the remains of beauty. Susan Einhorn, an assistant director of Schneider's 1972 version, insists that two overlapping periods of good looks infiltrated Tandy's performance. "Because Jessie is, and was, such a stunning-looking woman there was sexuality all over," she explains. "It was almost Blanche [DuBois] sexy. Blanche is struggling to stay alive, just like Winnie. There was a flood of emotion in the way Jessie looked as she mourned her past beauty. There was so much submerged sexuality--because of age and condition and because she and Willie were so far apart" (Interview).[33]

Winnie has always painstakingly reversed the audiotape of her life. In act two, clicks, scratches and hums increasingly jam her cerebral sound waves. The white noise of "Faint confused cries" (56) continually blots out the frequencies of Willie and the Shower/Cookers, not to mention Winnie the bubbly bride and busybody. Actresses would do well to play the second half with Winnie hearing her fading aurals as if on tape. Whitelaw, for example, considered

Happy Days a duet for woman and voice (Letter to Schneider). She not only used a tape recorder to help spot, analyze and maintain rhythms and inflections, she watched Beckett's mouth shape and copy her lines (Fehsenfeld "Perspective" 52). Performers might think of Winnie as a female Krapp, "the sensitive receptacle upon which the voice engraves itself, a kind of human tape recorder" (Chabert 28). As Krapp literally grafts his body onto his reel-to-reel, Winnie bends toward Willie whenever he produces an aural and she sways to the music-box rendition of "I Love You So." One could also consider her an ancestor of the Listener in Beckett's Ohio Impromptu, who, actor Alvin Epstein has noted, hatches "an alter ego who comes and reads the sad tale over, to have company, and to have someone share the grief" (Kalb 25). Each time Winnie replays her tape, she erases a few seconds of the memory of her life.

CHAPTER 10

AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF THE PERFORMANCE OF WINNIE'S LAST DIARY ENTRY

X.A. The Unsettling Truth Behind the Milly Story for Character and Actress.

Happy Days is Winnie's rambling, choppy, looping diary of her longest "day." So it seems appropriate to compose a journal of what actors believe is the play's longest stretch--from the Milly tale to the closing tableau. In this channel Winnie and Willie fast forward and rewind through recollections of birth, death and rebirth, ending with blown fuses. Here the Winnie actress comes closest to actually inhabiting her character. Here the Willie performer finally absorbs and tempers some of his partner's worries. It is in this portion that intellect denied yields a bonanza of shock waves.[34]

"What now? (Pause.) What now, Willie? (Long pause.)" (54). The props are hidden, Winnie can move only her face, words are dissolving into sounds, Willie may be dead. What can Winnie do? Conjure the story of Mildred. Winnie has long avoided alighting on the child, her doll and the attack mouse. Imitating a suicidal Willie has been therapeutic; the "golden" day has remained in her collection of props; at least some of her former beauty has lingered. But Milly--Milly embodies rancid innocence. She is the 4- or 5-year-old Winnie whose relatives could not protect her from being sexually abused. In fact, the offender may have been a

family member, since the assault took place at home with "papa, mamma, Bibby and...old Annie...running, in their night attire...to see what was the matter" (59). To block her shudders at the advancing wilderness, Winnie recasts the rapist as a relatively tame mouse and herself as a Little Red Riding Hood type. Her "waxen dolly" (55) is the only one whose clothes are tragically removed.[35]

The Mildred saga begins in a straightforward, narrative voice: "There is my story of course, when all else fails. (Pause.) A life. (Smile.) A long life (54). This is Winnie's attempt to cheer herself up.[36] But then she dips a toe into the whirlpool: "Beginning in the womb, where life *used* [italics added] to begin" (54-55). Something is off, she senses. Perhaps she is unconsciously drifting toward her sterility (which had surfaced in the toolshed memory), Willie's impotence, the aridness of their environment.

Winnie moves adroitly to a safer cove. She begins listing the clothes and accessories of Dolly in the same manner she had compiled her facial characteristics earlier in the second act: "Shoes, socks, undies, complete set, frilly frock, gloves." Since they arouse no troubling asides, these items roll off easily. "Narrative tone only for this day's installment," Beckett has explained. "She is only four or five etc. To be regarded as synopsis of previous installments. All this has already been told in narrative tone on countless preceding days" (Letter to Schneider 12 Sept. 1961: Schneider Collection). Winnie

intones: "...White mesh. (Pause.) A little white straw hat with chin elastic." She is tasting the nostalgic memories in, and between, the rests. But "pearly necklet" sounds a little frayed. Is the pearl-necklaced Winnie exposing the fiction of her fiction? If she is, she is not aware of it, for she leapfrogs over this possible link to greet the warm fantasy of "A little picture-book with legends in real print to go under her arm when she takes her walk" (55). Winnie, in other words, imagines herself as a protected youngster.

She then apparently introduces another more familiar figure. Could Willie, with his "...old blue eyes like saucers in the shadows" (28), be merging with Milly, whose "China blue eyes...open and close" (55)? Perhaps Winnie is again trying to prod him into commanding her to shut up, to brake her scary tale before it begins careening. Willie the Winnie-supervised reverse crawler also hovers in spirit when Winnie describes Milly descending the wooden stairs, "...backwards on all fours...though she had been forbidden to do so, entered the...(Pause)." Winnie can't mentally re-enter the off-limits room/womb. Maybe too many internal sounds are disorienting her; perhaps she expects a painful cacophony once she opens the door. Finally, she calms herself enough to continue: "...[T]iptoed down the silent passage, entered the nursery and began to undress Dolly. (Pause.) Crept under the table and began to undress Dolly. (Pause.) Scolding her...the while" (55). Winnie can speak quite freely after transferring the blame from herself to a

creature too naive to incur guilt.

But then fear knocks: "Suddenly a mouse--." Nesting in the following long pause is the suggestion that Winnie's third-person cover is fading. So she selects a friend, the mantra "Gently, Winnie" (55). Steadied, she heads for a nice, long interruption.

The passage which connects the halves of the Milly story features Winnie's longest delay. Its length attests to her fear of completing the tale. During her vacation, Winnie scolds Willie for his silence and yet worries about "Faint confused cries" in her head masking an S.O.S. from him. Time is flying so quickly that she becomes more confused about the deadline for song. She wants to sing, but despairs that to sing too soon may be "fatal." One "Simply can't sing," even if it is "now or never," and perpetual "sadness" after song are new admissions. At least post-musical "sadness" gives her an excuse to reintroduce the topic of sex, in which, she knows, Willie has a large investment. "Sadness after intimate sexual intercourse one is familiar with of course," she claims and pauses. "You would concur with Aristotle there, Willie, I fancy" (57). But the dirty old man ignores intercourse, Aristotle, Winnie and fleeting sadness.

Winnie next invokes the concept of poetic sadness. She selects Charles Wolfe's "Song" as her latest literary ally. The original excerpt reads:

Go, forget me--why should sorrow
O'er that brow a shadow fling?
Go, forget me--and tomorrow
Brightly smile and sweetly sing.
Smile--though I shall not be near thee;
Sing--though I shall never hear thee.

Winnie's version features many shrill, ellided, forgotten and wrong notes:

> Go forget me why should something o'er that something shadow fling...go forget me... why should sorrow...go forget me...never hear me...sweetly smile...brightly sing (57).

Sometimes one can't move; sometimes one can't sing; sometimes one can't recite accurately. "One loses one's classics" (57) admits a sighing Winnie. At least her lurching reading allows her to evade her imagined, symbolic murder of Willie. If she had told her spouse to "go forget" her, she would be acknowledging his death. But she can't bear to accept that he could smile or sing and she might miss these vital actions. The sappy Wolfe quote turns out to be a defense mechanism for Winnie. Thus recharged, she braces herself with "Oh not all. (Pause.) A part. (Pause.) A part remains (Pause.) That is what I find so wonderful, a part remains, of one's classics, to help one through the day" (58). "The quotes were safe places," claims Martha Fehsenfeld. "They were things I was sure of--once I found them, although until I found them there was great doubt...They were like stepping stones, like finding a sure [shore] place where I could put my feet" (Interview).

Fired by her imperfectly remembered quote, Winnie

circles back to a cheerier entertainment. "I call to the eye of the mind," she says, lifting from Keats' "At the Hawk's Well," "...Mr. Shower--or Cooker." The eyes close before she begins conjuring: rediscovering Wolfe appears to have sapped much of her strength. The bell then snaps her into the bridge "Hand in hand, in the other hands bags" (58). This yearning to rejoin Willie is a pipe dream. Winnie's couple, it turns out, are tinny echos of their first-half selves. Couple No. 1 was cantankerous, chatty, youthful. This pair is "Getting on...in life." The first onlookers argued and argued. Now Mr. Shower/Cooker is more interested in Winnie's decomposition: "Can't have been a bad bosom...in its day...Does she feel her legs?...Has she anything on underneath?" (58) That the reactionary Winnie would even paraphrase sexuality proves how desperately she needs Willie's attention.

Unrewarded, Winnie tries verbal abuse. The Shower/Cookers become nastier than their first incarnations. "Let go of me for Christ sake and drop!...Drop" said the Mrs. in the first half (43). "Let go of me for Christ sake and drop!...Drop *dead* [italics added]!" she insists this time (58). Winnie wants Willie to confirm that he is not dead; yet she recognizes that he may be dead and uses vehemence to jolt herself out of depression. "When I said it I was absolutely vicious," notes Aideen O'Kelly. "I said it through clenched teeth. It was not just a funny story" (Interview).

O'Kelly believed the Shower/Cookers were extinct. "They are no longer real people if they are part of the universe," the actress points out. "There are no real people except Willie. The objects are real, but Winnie can't use them" (Interview). The first time around, the couple left with a hand *in* each other's bag; here they exit "Hand in hand--*and* [italics added] the bags" (58-59). Given a few more years and vaguer retellings, the Shower/Cookers will probably become as disconnected as Winnie and Willie.

Martha Fehsenfeld offers another theory for Winnie's alterations. Like Willie, the Shower/Cookers have become an unsettling "memory of a memory of a memory" (Audiotape interview). Winnie no longer has the tools to keep them present. Without hands and nail file, she can't juice rhythms, inflections and memories; make herself feel busy; cover noisely her sad belief that she and Willie are the Shower/Cookers in an earlier, more mobile era. Accordingly, the second-half Shower/Cookers sound choppier and more ponderous than the first-act voyeurs. Madeleine Renaud, O'Kelly and Irene Worth each delivered the first vignette at the theater audience and they addressed the second to themselves and Willie. They acted as if the second-half Shower/Cookers had doused their fiery ancestors. (HD videotape 1971; interview; HD/Serban videotape 1979).

Winnie does, however, retain her colorful tongue. "Recede," as in the Shower/Cookers recede from her view, is an imagistic word, the gift of an artist/camera operator.

But she still fails to make Willie "help" divert her from Milly's precarious adventures. Now "she can't see without her glasses, there's a blank in front of her, there's nothing to balance her," claims O'Kelly. "It's the final straw. She must get back to Milly" (Interview).

Winnie's body hourglass is emptying faster and time's millet heap is piling higher. The first half of the Milly tale was a relatively smooth journey with a few hairpin turns. O'Kelly narrated it matter-of-factly, calmly, "as if speaking to a child" (Interview). The second part begins similarly, with the nearly automatic carryover of "Suddenly a mouse." The difference is, Winnie's school-marm voice has turned high-pitched, childish, trebly (O'Kelly interview; HD/Serban videotape 1979). The third-person facade remains, but Winnie and Milly are inexorably meshing. The pace quickens: "Suddenly a mouse ran up her little thigh and Mildred"--the formal title is another defense mechanism--"dropping Dolly in her fright, began to scream..." Winnie bisects Mildred's three screams with three of her own. In either case, the cries reach the protectors "too late" (59) to prevent the attack.

Acting Winnie/Mildred's plummet depends on personal and theatrical arcs. Up until this intersection, Worth's character had been a mostly giddy, self-conscious "Winnie the Pooh" (Gussow 1979 C10) or Chaplin tramp (Ben-Zvi 3). So it was not surprising that Milly goo-gooed like Baby Huey or a foreigner tripping over English. Worth's screams were

jumpy, quick, rather artificial--like actorly pistons. Here was an adult recalling a mouse charge in childhood. The actress' messages had less to do with rape than the real-life model for Beckett's youngster: Mildred Coote, victim of a scurrying rodent at the young playwright's Foxrock house many years ago (Duckworth 102). Winnifred Mann left the issue hanging with a nursery-school teacher's voice for Milly. While she believed that Winnie had been raped, she still leaned toward what John Fletcher calls "a burlesque tale of how little Mildred was deflowered by a mouse" (Gontarski Manuscript Study 42). Mann lived Peter Hall's edict that the Beckett actor should think but not feel (Interview).

Fehsenfeld invented an image to coax her terror. She placed a likeness of a mouse within her right-hand field of vision. "As long as I could avert my eyes from that spot, Winnie and I were safe." But the character's eyes, often forced to dart from side to side in the second act, betrayed her. The mouse appeared in her range finder and her safeguards vanished ("Perspective" 54). Barbara Bain also dipped into outside motivation. "...Winnie screams to try to wake up God," she insists. "It's her last chance...She doesn't think Willie is there anymore" (Interview).

God's silence hit Ruth White personally. Winnie's black flashes of corroded faith deeply troubled this ardent Catholic during Alan Schneider's 1961 production. Playing the role, she said, "...made me terribly compassionate,

particularly to realize that so many people live this way, without hope of God. What do you depend on?" (Long Island Catholic 6). Also pecking at her was the fear that spectators would balk at such a visually static gabfest (White interview) and the worry that the part would overwhelm her. "More than once, Ruth despaired and felt she could not go on," Schneider recalled. "More than once, she was certain that she was failing me--and Mr. Beckett" (Entrances 296-97).[37]

Private anguish laced O'Kelly's cries. In each exclamation point she compressed her unconscious recollection of being sexually abused by an uncle at age 9. Despite a fictional umbrella, sense memory pelted her. Just like Winnie, she explains, "I had to take a long pause after 'Too late,' because it was so overpowering for me to get over it." An underground rush of long-simmering deceit also halted her. Scandal had to be suppressed and repressed, she notes, in her illusion-dominated Irish Catholic household. O'Kelly claims her parents for years refused to discuss the incident. "My father even went to confession to ask the priest to explain everything to him." O'Kelly was in her twenties when she finally provoked her mother to admit that the coverup had been damaging. For the actress, as for Winnie, the treaty came too late to completely heal the injury (Interview).

Let us return to the stage. Time is compacting Winnie. The adult in the first Milly vignette has become a child in

the second portion. With Willie gone, she is an embryo lodged in her mother's peaceful womb and the turbulent, off-limits childhood room. She embodies one of her earlier reflections: "...Mildred has memories, she will have memories, of the womb, before she dies, the mother's womb" (55). She is on the cusp of a nervous breakdown. "When you're in this state," notes O'Kelly, "you have to fix on something, whether it be a toothbrush or a piece of music or a book--or you give in, give up, commit suicide" (Interview). Winnie troops on because she is a survivor. O'Kelly, who insists the play's theme is "one can do nothing," continued because she had more or less resolved her dilemma years ago, and because a personal dive would have been embarrassing (Interview).[38] Faith and Irish black humor prodded the slumping White. "Ruth believed to the end that they were happy days, " insists her brother, Charles. "Like many Irish people, she believed that marriages were so sad and wakes so happy...She felt all along that Winnie's existence implies a belief in the hereafter and divinity, which she thought Beckett was expressing" (Interview). The character's objective, Schneider told White, is "To Live"; for the director, White's aim was "To Go On" (Entrances 297).[39]

"This play is about survival, about human spirit trying to survive," explains Angela Paton. "Winnie doesn't allow herself to stay depressed, and you can't allow yourself to get depressed. You can't indulge in the terror" (Interview).

What can Winnie do now? The silence after "Too late" is her longest yet. Her greatest fear--life without words, to "gaze before me with compressed lips" (27)--is edging closer. Time has collapsed, two excruciating memories have reunited: her tardy protectors have joined her chronically slow husband. Winnie decides to babble, to exercise her mouth and stall her creeping consciousness. Since she is decanting, her mind is unusually scattered. "I used to think" tumbles out as "I say I used to think..." (59)--a memory of a memory of speaking, her most natural act. "May one speak of time?" Winnie asked rhetorically before veering into Milly's story. "...One does" (50) was her uplifting amendment. Now outright dismissals are more common. "...[T]here is never any difference between one fraction of a second and the next," she points out. "Why bring that [indistinct time] up again?" (60). Winnie can't issue a qualifier now: time is submerging even her awareness.

But Winnie is persistent. To numb and excite herself, she exclaims that her neck aches. "Say no more" tips the seesaw again; "But I must say more" brings equilibrium. "No, something must move," a positive recognition, is followed by its canceler, "I can't anymore." Winnie struggles to recover her comforting "immortal lines," but when she finds them they turn out to be more ominous than her usual folderol about "woe" and "sorrow": "It might be the eternal dark. (Pause.) Black night without end" (60).

Winnie gropes for another positive release and her

fulcrum. She reminds herself that it is too early to warble her song and she realizes that the Shower/Cookers and Milly have dimmed for good. So she conjures again her wedding day, what Beckett terms "the holy day" (Fehsenfeld audiotape interview). Her internal camera zooms to "The pink fizz. (Pause.) The flute glasses. (Pause.) The last guest gone. (Pause.) The last bumper with the bodies nearly touching. (Pause.) The look." But her lens is clouding: "(Long pause.) What look? (Long pause.) What day?" (60). Winnie is being assaulted by the notion of a once picture-perfect day that has rotted chiefly because of her groom's silence. "It is not the edge of the end, it is the end," says Fehsenfeld (Audiotape interview). In desperation and resignation, Winnie gropes for what she considers her final resource. The song may be too "old" and it may kill, but it could also damp the echoing cries in her brain.[40]

"She's been sitting on the electric chair, the noose is around her neck, they're about to pull away the platform." And then, suddenly, like a "thunderbolt" (Fehsenfeld audiotape interview), Willie rises above the mound. He is "dressed to kill" [41] in top hat, morning (mourning?) coat, striped trousers, white gloves. On display is the third cousin of the *deus-ex-machina* equestrian in The Threepenny Opera, not to mention the first cousin of Winnie's hopelessly stagy props, images and events.

X.B. The Comforting Presence/Non-Presence of Willie/Willie Actor

Why does Willie rear his ground-hog head? Perhaps Winnie's screams awakened him. Perhaps he needs to play disruptor once again. Perhaps he plans to cap her wedding cake of a memory with his groom figure. He may be the "zephyr" (60) which blows the cobwebs from Winnie's mental, physical, and metaphysical prison. He may be the most vivid alignment of the rusty past and present--the physical confirmation that the gilded day is finally, irretrievably, lost. Call him a fourth-rate, music-hall groom.[42]

What happens during the Willie actor's hiatus? Each of the performers interviewed made sure they stayed awake. None wanted dozing or daydreaming or Winnie's enervating questions to lull and force them to miss their few pivotal cues. "Sometimes I was too sleepy to answer," notes John Leighton. "Sometimes I said to myself: I wouldn't speak to you if you asked me. If I chose to just participate when I was saying lines, it could not work. I never stopped thinking [in character] for a moment. I had to play every moment with her" (Interview).

"Oh no doubt you are dead, like the others," says the second-act Winnie, "no doubt you have died, or gone away and left me, like the others, it doesn't matter, you are there" (50). Likewise, Willie actors have comforted their partners even when silent and absent. According to O'Kelly, memories of collaborations with Leighton and the potential for

hooking up with him again was, to steal a phrase from Winnie, "paradise enow" (32; Interview). Wyman Pendleton and Bud Thorpe offered more tangible, lingering support. Before every first curtain, the former bussed a cheek of the superstitious, craning Renaud (Interview). When out of sight, the latter stayed directly behind Fehsenfeld, rather than to her right. "It was done just to keep her mind straight, just to know that your friend is right behind you," reports Thorpe. "He can't help you, but he's right behind you. It's like: I slept so much better even though you were passed out on the bed" (Interview).

Willie's trip around the mound begins with a struggle to right himself on his knees. He uses the back of the heap like a balance beam, collapsing just before Winnie recognizes his stirring. Obviously, he hasn't exerted himself this forcefully in years: his usual method of exercise is yanking a newspaper. "I had to literally brace myself just to appear at a certain height [above the mound]," indicates Leighton. Stiff muscles and ramrod-straight back--qualities similar to Winnie's in the second act--enabled him to support this semi-crouch. From this point he swiveled left to glance at O'Kelly/Winnie, dropped down to all fours, and began the crawl past the right side of the dune (Interview).

Willie's staggered expedition begins "a portrait in motion" of his life with Winnie (Bermel 124). On hands and knees, he is Winnie's pet; crawling forward instead of

backward he is her rebellious child/husband. After a halt near the center, he turns and gazes toward front, spruces his mustache, and--viola!--he becomes "the misplaced bridegroom...[a] living, grinning almost corpse on his sluggard way to the funeral parlor--amen!..." (Reavey 2). George Voskovec spasmed like the pajama-hiked clown of Beckett's early drafts.[43] He pulled himself up from behind the ridge, slithered purposefully, dusted his left thigh and hat, and tweaked his "Battle of Britain" lip hairs like a starchy melodrama villain (HD/Serban videotape 1979). Thorpe's Willie moved much more awkwardly and slowly. On one hand, he followed Beckett's tidying cuts: the playwright today suggests only a mustache groom--no tie straightening, no hat adjusting or doffing (Knowlson 134). On the other hand, he reasoned that Willie--the victim of battering sun, deafness, Winnie's blatherings, maybe even too much masturbation--was too ill to be played healthy (Interview). Thorpe's Willie was a heat-exhausted tortoise; Voskovec's a peppy salamander.[44]

Willie's salute makes him collapse for the second time in the play. According to Beckett, his fall may be "...from weakness or because of Winnie's gaze" (Knowlson 134). Characteristically, Winnie the camera misses the significance of his effort. Most of her reactions to his appearance belie her delight at his re-emergence. As Willie has recharged his lamp of mobility, she recharges her lamp of speech; as Willie has repeated his previous roles in his

crawl, she recreates her relationship with him in a word-salad monologue. She mixes in the mocking wife ("Reminds me of the day you came whining for my hand...I worship, you, Winnie, be mine"); the giggling young lover ("What a get up, you do look a sight!...Where are the flowers?" [61]); the unconsciously funny mound mate ("What were you doing all this time...Changing?" [62]). Fun becomes sorrow when she touches a dangerous buzzword in "Feast your old eyes, Willie." In the first act, Winnie had implored Willie to "feast" his eyes on her; now she understands that what he visually digests is merely "remains." "I haven't been able to look after it, you know" (62), she admits sadly.[45] Willie sinks his head, from exhaustion and despair, and concretizes the crux of "Gesture of Words. Gesture of Silence. Gesture of Forget Me Not. Intermittent Beau Geste ironically contrasted with the pervasive gravity of grub" (Reavey 2).

Why does Winnie react so ambivalently? Visually, she and Willie are strangers to one another. Throughout the play, she has been craning to see part of him; with his back to her, he has seen less of her. "If he is still recognizable," Beckett has explained, "it is because she sees him daily whereas he seems never to look at her...so that end of play he may be looking at her for the first time after numberless days--(smile) to speak in the old style" (Letter to Schneider 13 July 1961: Schneider Collection).

Winnie begins to experiment with verbal elixirs. She

checks vital signs: "Have you gone deaf, Willie? (Pause.) Dumb?" She tries a less caustic scolding of his inattentiveness: "Oh I know you were never one to talk. I worship you Winnie be mine and then nothing from that day forth only titbits from Reynolds' News...Ah well, what matter..." (62). According to Bain, "Winnie had made such an enormous investment in her wedding day--it was such an ultimate experience and then Willie kept reading the newspaper. Of course she has been disappointed." The actress links Winnie's letdown to that of Mary Cavan Tyrone in Long Day's Journey into Night. "She says: 'I fell in love with James Tyrone and was so happy for a time.' Like Mary, Winnie never really lived beyond her early happiness" (Interview).

Undaunted, Winnie attempts other stabs at union: "Do you ever hear cries, Willie?"; "Look at me again, Willie...Once more, Willie" (62). This is Winnie the cheerleader, a blander, paler version of the woman who once pleaded for another croaked "I Love You So." But then the sad comedy of miscommunication really begins. Winnie smiles in anticipation of a pleasant look and Willie fires a withering stare. Voskovec's furrowed brow looked chilling, especially since his mustache camouflaged any counteractive smile on his lips (HD/Serban videotape 1979). Like the doting mother/wife she has occasionally been, Winnie asks Willie to "Put on your hat, dear, it's the sun, don't stand on ceremony, I won't mind." He rebels by dropping his

topper and charging the mound. Perhaps he doesn't like being told to stand when he can't; maybe he can't stand on ceremony. When Voskovec tossed the hat over the mound, he fleshed out another slow-motion scene from Willie's life: a *commedia* straight man finally retaliating after years of meekly returning damaging missiles (HD/Serban videotape 1979).

Winnie reacts gleefully, like a child-woman: "Oh, I say this is terrific!" Willie stops, clinging to the mound with one hand, teetering--the salamander with dead legs. "One foot up and then down," recalls Martin Beck, "about to dart off at any minute, a kind of a rocking motion" (Interview). Thorpe moved achingly slow so that Winnie and spectators could file their first three-dimensional view of Willie (Interview).

X.C. Debating Willie's Grasping Hand

Ambiguity blossoms. Who or what is Willie stretching for? Is it Winnie? "There was a time when I could have given you a hand," she mentions. "(Pause.) And then a time before that again when I did give you a hand. (Pause) You were always in dire need of a hand, Willie" (63). In 1979 Beckett magnified this pun by having Leonard Fenton raise a hand whenever he heard the word "hand" (Cohn Just Play 279). At least this character had functioning ears. Does Willie want to plant a kiss on his spouse's face? "Maybe he wants to caress her," Beck offers, "maybe he wants to wipe a tear from her eye. He could be telling her he loves her. Even

in his agony, his desolation, he is coming to say: "It's alright, dear. If we're going to go, we're going to go" (Interview).

"...[O]r is it something else?," as Winnie wonders (60). "My first impulse was to touch her, to comfort her," insists Leighton. But Winnie's sudden eruption of gabble, flecked with overwhelming reminders of platitudes and indignation, angered his character. Leighton's Willie suddenly didn't want to be "put out to pasture" so quickly (Interview). Adds Beck: "He could be reaching for her jugular" (Interview). Because Jessica Tandy's character had "talked to him like a retarded child" Hume Cronyn threw a mini-tantrum in kind (Einhorn interview). His slope ascent brimmed with "supreme confidence" (Mandell interview).

Or does Willie intend to grasp and fire the gun? After all, Winnie has never given him "Brownie," the "hand" he may have desired all along. Now, of course, she can't nudge it toward his hand. Perhaps Willie aims to shoot himself so he can cancel any remaining anecdotes about Brownie and company. Maybe he is arranging for a double death. "He wants to shoot her to stop her chatter," explains Beck. "It's been a constant tirade all day. How many men have killed for less?" (Interview).[46]

Platforms of cheeriness and meanness dot the 1961 Grove Press text. Beckett the director, however, has cut goads like "Come on, dear, put a little jizz into it, I'll cheer you on" and "Have another go, Willie, I'll cheer you on"

(63; Knowlson 199). The author's ideal Winnie seems nicer toward the end, which means that her partner should be less likely to want to send her to a real grave. Yet he is angry enough to threaten her with a fierce stare. "Don't look at me like that!" Winnie demands. "(Pause. Vehement.) Don't look at me like that! (Pause. Low.) Have you gone off your head, Willie? (Pause. Do.) Out of your poor old wits, Willie?" (63).

Finally, to dam the verbal flush, Willie speaks. His terse offering, "Win," actually carries many meanings. It is a contraction of "Winnie." It is a sign of recognition for a recently unfamiliar being. It proves that Willie can speak and needs to communicate with more than Pavlovian head raises and lowerings, more than opening and shutting his eyes. "It's like you're so sick and can't talk to anybody, but someone asks you an important question and you have to answer them," notes Beck (Interview). Willie's snippet could be the climax of a series of herculean accomplishments. Voskovec exaggerated this "victory" by tripping over the syllable, virtually coughing it up (HD/Serban videotape 1979).

But "Win" also creates potent negative overtones. Willie is so petered out that he can't join two syllables. He simmers "...with tongue-tied emotion, impotently smiling into vacuity..." (Reavey 2). Perhaps he is admitting "You win" to a verbal gunslinger: he can't touch the gun, therefore game, set and match to Winnie. Thorpe divided

Willie's message into three quasi-syllables: "whi," "iiinnnn" and "uhhh"--thin, fat, thin, like a bad joint" (Interview). Leighton elongated the word, added a slight wobble, faded it, and closed with a "death rattle" (Interview). Weddings, he urged in essence, feature births and deaths: Willie the castrated swine revives and poops out.

If Winnie hears creaking in "Win," she doesn't mention it. Instead, a pleased expression flashes across her face. "Winnie happy because Willie has answered," Beckett has noted. "It doesn't matter to her what he says, as long as he speaks to her" (Letter to Schneider 13 July 1961: Schneider Collection). Perked up, she continues: "Oh this is a happy day, this will have been a happy day! (Pause.) After all. So far" (64). Notice the inclusion of a comma after the first clause: when Winnie delivered her first Happy Days verbal toast, she closed this sentence fragment with a period. In other words, Winnie's aural hourglass is nearly empty; the inscrutable universe is signaling once again that happiness is fleeting. Assured that Willie recognizes her, she finally tugs her song "from her hip pocket" (Bain interview). "I Love You So" may be a treacly dessert "borrowed from the comforting, illusory world of musical comedy" (Knowlson Happy Days/Oh! Les Beaux Jours 110), but it remains Winnie's only untapped, unsullied prop which can guide her to win-some days of yore.[47]

It soon becomes apparent that Winnie's singing is a case

of you win some, you lose some. Winnie has long culled her past successfully and unsuccessfully; likewise, the tone of the sung waltz has been a mixed bag in performance. White "sang it in a mock-soprano, sang it almost like to a child, but with a sense of memory," says Charles White. "...She sang it with her eyes," nearly without irony or self-pity. A favorite tune of her parents, the lyrics and melody were too pleasant to be treated sadly (Interview). Renaud virtually sighed the lyrics, a sadly sweet, almost beatific mask on her face, a trace of future solace etched on her countenance and voice. Hers was "the song of a woman who still wants to see and hear the man she loves..." (Renaud 82; HD videotape 1971). Renaud's rendition highlighted Winnie's adaptation of the lyrics from "You love me so" to "I love you so." This is, after all, a duet performed alone.

Peggy Ashcroft, who played the home stretch in "mounting terror," uttered "a cracked song of a love long since dead and clearly had no hope whatsoever for the future" (Pountney 101). Dicing her interpretation were shards of "I Love You So's" sung too soon, too late, or not at all. Worth increased the volume on "Every touch of fingers" and made it fluid, focused, elegant, nearly hushed, almost subconscious. She was not so much a merry widow as a retiring ham actress (HD/Serban videotape 1979). "Ironic nostalgia" colored Mann's rendition. "By this time Winnie knows it's the end for them," she indicates, "or she's hoping it is...so this

is the last romantic song about a romance that may never have been" (Interview).

Following Beckett's suggestion (Knowlson 193), Paton and Bain hummed the first six lines of the waltz. The latter insists that singing wordlessly approximates Winnie's attempt to dissolve the mucus on her vocal cords: the song is a major effort for her, like "Win" for her spouse. "Every touch of fingers" marked the end of the warmup. Bain projected this line "clear as a bell," so that everyone could hear Winnie fantasizing about touching Willie's fingers. Fehsenfeld performed all the lyrics; she reasons that Winnie "sings, not hums, because her heart is so full that she has to express it" (Audiotape interview).

Winnie's giddiness wilts after the end of the song and a pause. O'Kelly admits she was "devastated, almost dizzy" at the conclusion of "I Love You So" (Interview). She felt--as actress and character--"the sadness after song" (57). Spontaneous tears regularly dripped from Bain's eyes as she began to wrap up the tune. "I didn't want to sob," she recalls, "but the water would come down..." If she had been able to see more than Beck's silhouetted glare in the blinding lights, she might have felt less actual sorrow (Interview).

Now nearly all of Winnie's marionette strings have been snipped. Freer than she has been in an hour and a half (or an eternity), she closes her eyes. Perhaps she dreams of melting flesh; perhaps she imagines another climb by Willie.

The bell, however, rudely announces "World without end Amen," yet another in a life choked with interruptions. Could the ringing be her punishment for singing too soon, or a manifestation of her doubt, "Have you timed it out right...It's of use, but what if it's ill-placed?" (Bain interview). Time's book-ends have never been so indistinguishable and so oppressive.

The alarm has been another source of actorly discomfort. Fehsenfeld was jolted by a mixture of school bell and table saw slicing through heavy wood. "It was the kind of bell you want to grit your teeth to," admits Thrope, who designed the sound for her 1983 production. "...It would bust your insides, chill your spine..." (Interview). "It was more knife than bell," adds the actress, remembering Beckett's demand for an effect approximating that of a "knife on metal" (Audiotape interview; "Perspective" 51).

O'Kelly was so absorbed by Winnie's predicament, so unconscious of time, that she couldn't anticipate the bell and evade its assault. "It would get the nerve endings going," says the performer, whose migraines were produced regularly by quick, full light fadeups (Interview). Indeed, even a normally indomitable reviewer was so rattled that he wrote: "...[I]t is sheer benightedness that turns such aural effects as the bell sounds into earsplitting cacophonies..." (Simon 1987 133).

While the alarm was gentler in Worth's production, it scored nevertheless.[48] The actress' face flinched and her

eyes bobbed lightly. She nudged out a smile, shot her eyes center right, and glanced sweetly at Voskovec. Her eyes flickered with the hope that the day would continue, albeit in shorter spurts. But her partner's glare tolled the bell for the finally buried "old style." Worth's expression suddenly changed to brittle and parched, telegraphing a final descent into Winnie's suffocating hole/life/death. A 30-second tableau of impotence followed, with Worth and Voskovec ending as stale mates in a stalemate (HD/Serban videotape 1979).

Suspension of judgment caps a play brimming with cancelations. Beckett could have extinguished Winnie's torture through such means as spontaneous combustion, vacuum suction, asphyxiation, heat stroke, "the lotus pill of oblivion" (Reavey 3). But Winnie remains stuck and alert to embody "the impossibility of catastrophe. Ended at its inception and at every subsequent instant, it continues, ergo can never end" (Beckett letter to Schneider 1958: Schneider Collection). Wearing her womb, memories and tomb, the castaway physicalizes Vladimir's news flash, "Astride of a grave and a difficult birth" (Waiting for Godot 58). Winnie twists Nell's idea in Endgame that "Nothing is funnier than unhappiness" into "Nothing is unhappier than funniness...The 'old joke' is not Winnie rather the joke of being that is said to have caused Democritas to die of laughter" (Beckett letter to Schneider 13 July 1961: Schneider Collection). The viewer/reader senses that the

bell will gouge again and Winnie will answer it--even if Willie doesn't, or can't, even if all that is left of her is a frumpy, feathered hat topping a dune. Perhaps she will open her eyes a bit more slowly and groggily, but her medicine-bottle existence will always contain at least a few dregs of happiness.[49]

For some actresses, the pain of the "impossible" end continued after the last tableau and blackout. They list some of the after-tremors: ringing ears from the bell for knockout; dizzyness from the tension of about 30 minutes of head-only performing; muscle cramps; arthritic flareups; lethargy; depression. Bain found little therapy in a perfunctory curtain call. "I had to acknowledge the applause by not moving," she points out. "I could only look at them. Sometimes I smiled. But I needed to literalize it, to bow, to stand up straight. I wanted to burst out of the mound. It was very painful, probably more so than the performance, because there was no release...I would drive home with an unresolved feeling" (Interview). Fehsenfeld's "terrible letdown" arose partly from an inability to recapture the "elation" of scaling the play's many peaks (Interview). This is a standard problem for actors who must quickly leave a theatrical summit for the relatively flat offstage world; trust Beckett to guarantee that "sadness" resonates long after "song."

While each actress interviewed needed to decompress body and mind, the time varied significantly. Sada Thompson

remembers joining the land of the living fairly quickly (Interview). O'Kelly claims that, with the exception of one evening, she headed directly to her apartment during the run. "I couldn't literally talk about the performance," she explains. "I couldn't face: 'Why do you do that?' 'How do you feel?' I was too exhausted." The tingling happiness of being in tune with a logical composition, she hastens to add, made the weariness more than bearable (Interview).

EPILOGUE

THE LINGERING ALLURE OF WINNIE

> What a comic bill, this ludicrous hell--of pathetic striving, futile reminiscence, and panto-aspiration...But all is not lost. So long, that is, we remain as detached as the author. Detached ironically in centered, feeling mind. In comedy. So long, as we have a leg, a physical leg, to fall from (Reavey 3).

How have actresses viewed Winnie after their bouts with Happy Days? Certainly not with a leg (air?) of detachment. Each of the animators interviewed insist that the role is a *tour de force* and a badge of courage. "It's a mountain climb every performance, and a gorgeous one," claims Barbara Bain. "There's a certain amount of actor's arrogance to think you can get to the top" (Interview). "When I first did it, people asked me if I was scared," says Angela Paton, who originally fleshed out Winnie in 1974 in Berkeley, Calif. "I told them that something like this is beyond terror. You just can't indulge yourself" (Interview).

Each performer wants to fill and drain Winnie's decanter again. The next time, they indicate, they would probably come nearer to seizing more of her moods and roles. "There are moments you live while you're going through them that you don't understand," Paton indicates, "but later, when you look back at them, you understand them but you can't live them. It's always incomplete. Winnie never feels complete and you can never feel complete with Winnie" (Interview). "I embrace her as a woman who prevails," summarizes Bain. "She has that almost foolish optimism that is so moving--that no

matter what, she's not going to stop" (Interview).

During her 1983 tour Martha Fehsenfeld employed an analysis of Racine's Andromaque to convince herself that Winnie ends illuminated. "The play comes to an end when the mind faces facts," Beckett once stated, "when the mind has an intricate awareness of facts, as opposed to a scattered awareness, when there is a unification of awareness and excessive light" (Fehsenfeld audiotape interview). The actress vows that her next Winnie will finish glowing with more of this electricity. "I would say 'Yes' to this atrocious affair called life," she explains. "I would end more on a note of affirmation. 'Yes' is the note of a survivor, the one who survives in spite of everything...The body may die but the spirit lives on."

"I have changed in five years," Fehsenfeld adds. "I have ripened and rotted. I have been encouraged and discouraged: I have despaired and been exhilarated...All of those years will be in there because Winnie is organic, she is alive as a character. And you bring your own life to her life, wherever you are" (Audiotape interview).

NOTES

[1] Samuel Beckett, Happy Days (New York: Grove Press, 1961). Following references are to this edition of the text.

[2] Billie Whitelaw's right hand spasmed at the start of Beckett's 1979 production of Happy Days at the Royal Court Theatre in London. But this was a voluntary reaction to the first bell, not an involuntary one caused by a blast of stage lights. In fact, the Royal Court opening fadeup lasted 55 seconds: a long wakeup call, Beckett reasoned, for someone who awakens slowly (James Knowlson, ed., Samuel Beckett's Production Notebook for 'Happy Days' [New York: Grove Press, 1985] 159, 155).

[3] Beckett shares here a pre-debut quip with Alan Schneider, a dear friend and prized director of the American productions of his works. Judged by many outsiders as a grim killjoy, the playwright wittily inscribed Schneider's 1972 copy of Not I: "With much love to Alan S.--without whom 'Not I' would not be 'me'" (Alan Schneider Papers, Mandeville Collection, U of California, San Diego).

Beckett has expressed concern for several Winnies. A month before the first performance of Happy Days, he wrote: "...It's a tremendous job for an actress. Please tell R.W. [Ruth White] how much I am with her in thought and admire her courage" (Letter to Schneider, 17 Aug. 1961, Jean Schneider Collection). Closer to opening night, Schneider arranged for the author to console a nervous White by

phone. "I have faith in you, Ruth," he reportedly said. "Have faith in the play--and yourself" (Charles White, interview, 1 April 1988).

Jessica Tandy earned an authorly option three months before she opened the Mouth in Not I and Winnie in the four-play Beckett Festival in Lincoln Center's Forum theater. "On top of HD superhuman job for J.T. If she finds it too much, just forget about the 2nd evening" (Letter to Schneider, 25 July 1972, Schneider Collection).

[4] Spectators might be more sympathetic if they knew the Winnie actress was pregnant. Beckett missed this possibility when he failed to convince a pregnant Joan Plowright to premiere Winnie (Letter to Schneider, 13 July 1961, Schneider Collection).

Frances Sternhagen, by the way, carried her fifth child while urn-interred in Schneider's 1964 production of Play (Frances Sternhagen, interview, 3 March 1988).

[5] Beckett's spirit has glossed many a production. One reviewer insisted that Brenda Bruce resembled the author in George Devine's 1962 Happy Days at the Royal Court (Kenneth Tynan, Observer Weekend Review 4 Nov. 1962: 27).

Because Happy Days contains a potent visual metaphor and because it features a number of memorable soliloquies, it is not surprising that dominant actresses have generated long-term spiritual umbrellas. As a critic described Tandy: "...though gracious, and intelligent, she seems a mite theatrical, too much the grande dame; or it may just be that

Madeleine Renaud's definitive Winnie has undercut all the others" (John Simon, New York 11 Dec. 1972: 71).

Some interpreters claim that Beckett's aura has guided them during productions. Schneider nicknamed the mobile spotlight "Sam" in his 1964 version of Play. "...[A]lthough he's never actually been there, I've always rehearsed as though he were in the shadows somewhere watching and listening, ready to answer all our doubts, quell our fears, and share our surprises and small talk" (Alan Schneider, "Waiting for Beckett," On Beckett: Essays and Criticism, ed. S.E. Gontarski [New York: Grove Press, 1987] 242).

Actor David Warrilow says he once channeled Beckett's voice as a gift to the playwright. "I had liked the voice I had used for A Piece of Monologue," explains the veteran of Beckett's shorter works. "I liked the fact that it was low, old sounding. However, Beckett thought it was not appropriate. 'It is a bedtime story,' he said."

Before he was due to perform the play in French, Warrilow arranged for the author to "sing" the text to him. "The voice he chose was the lightest, quietest possible, with almost a liturgical inflection, very lyrical. It had a slightly sing-songy, priest-like flow to it." As part of an 80th birthday celebration in Paris in 1986, Warrilow attempted to duplicate Beckett's delivery, "although it's not the way I hear the play" (Interview, 11 March 1988).

[6] Jessica Tandy struggled mightily with the Mouth when she appeared in Schneider's 1972 version. "She could not

wait to be forever free of...head clamp, blackened makeup, and stichomythic pace" (Schneider, "Waiting for Beckett" 251). She probably would have felt more uncomfortable if Schneider had accepted a producer's suggestion to "blow up the Mouth on to a giant full-stage color TV screen so that the audiences...would be able to see and understand the play better. Not I, said I" (Schneider, "Waiting for Beckett" 241).

[7] Pauline Flanagan, Tandy's understudy during the Beckett Festival, read off the teletape (Enoch Brater, "The Absurd' Actor in the Theatre of Samuel Beckett," Educational Theatre Journal 27 [1975]: 200).

[8] Beckett reluctantly agreed with Blin that Renaud should originate the French Winnie. He eventually rationalized: "When you have the greatest voice in the French theatre, you do not insist on other, less important qualities" (Deirdre Bair, Samuel Beckett: A Biography [New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978] 564).

Whitelaw has spoken knowingly of Renaud's pre-show cocoon: "She "would shut herself alone for two hours. The hours on the stage are too painful. They demand intense concentration. I think that if I were not in a special state of mind I could not interpret the quality of silence and the quality of speech in the play" ("Billie Up to Her Neck in Beckett," Manchester Guardian 30 May 1979: 13).

[9] Beckett's tunneling methods worked too well for one curious observer of the original production at the Cherry

Lane Theater in Manhattan. "J.F." wrote that he/she was mystified by the sight of Ruth White as Winnie. Criticizing the actress' hairless armpits, she/he wondered: "Why not thickish red moss? Winnie is so caught up in her toilet that she forgets. It would be typical of an older woman, obvious hypocrisy...

"It appears that she should be around forever, and is only one step away from her dotage. Yet your actor is still neat, prettyish, youngish in appearance. She is meant to look so incongruous beside Willie" (Letter to Alan Schneider, Richard Barr, Clinton Wilder, Edward Albee and Samuel Beckett, 14 Sept. 1961, Schneider Papers).

A well-known director offers a fairer view of the tight frame: "Here is the audience (and the critics) at any play (or film) which after two hours finds the answers, which glibly assert that life is good, that there is always hope and that all will be well. Here is Walter Kerr and the audience of The Miracle Worker and Ike...grinning from ear to ear and buried up to their necks" (Peter Brook, "Happy Days and Marienbad," Encore (January-February 1962): 36).

[10] When told about invading insects in several productions, Mark Wright, stage manager for Schneider's 1961 production, quipped: "Luckily, there weren't any cockroaches" (Interview, 19 July 1988).

[11] Winnie listed many more treasures in Beckett's second draft of the play: "I could name many things of course, those I require daily, others of occasional utility, perhaps

forty or fifty all told, but all, no, I could not name all...No...the deeper layers in particular, who knows what...treasures--letters, favours, tokens, trinkets, petals, dance-cards with pencils, theatre and concert programmes..." (S.E. Gontarski, Samuel Beckett's 'Happy Days': A Manuscript Study [Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Libraries, 1977] 39).

At least one scholar has attached sexual symbolism to Winnie's innermost friends: "It is true that at times Winnie seems to be a part of a large, symbolic travesty of sexuality: the various phallic instruments at her command (the parasol, the toothbrush, the revolver) arrayed against the vaginal hole into which Willie retreats, and the lubricant that she counsels him to 'work it well in'..." (Sidney Homan, Beckett's Theaters: Interpretations for Performance [Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell UP, 1984] 85).

[12] Beckett highlighted the play's *commedia* angle when he insisted that the prop-controlled Act without Words I open for Happy Days in the two-play-per-performance repertory of the 1972 Beckett Festival at Lincoln Center (Letter to Schneider, 25 July 1972, Schneider Papers).

[13] Beckett has linked Winnie's hand dive with *pescar fuori*. The playwright was on hand in James Joyce's flat when Joyce asked his daughter to "fish out" a piano score for a Rossini opera (Knowlson 163).

[14] "The revolver is called 'Browning-Brownie,' not because there is a revolver of that name, but because it is

always uppermost. If the line was by another poet the revolver wd. [would] be called by the name of that other poet" (Beckett, letter to Schneider, 1961, Schneider Collection).

[15] Unruly parasols have troubled many Happy Days producers. Douglas Schmidt, set designer of Schneider's 1972 version, recalls: "It had a number of incarnations. The flame ended up pretty spectacular, although not 100 percent reliable" (Interview, 16 May 1988). According to Winnifred Mann, a 1988 Winnie in San Francisco, "We went for flame and we were lucky to get smoke. It was stunning when it happened" (Interview, 30 Sept. 1988).

Prop misfires made the Beckett Festival especially draining for Cronyn. In a letter to the artistic director of the Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre, the actor writes of three rehearsal incidents for Act without Words I where he risked "being maimed or killed" (Letter to Jules Irving, 1 Nov. 1972, Schneider Papers). To avoid recurring problems, Cronyn and Jessica Tandy eliminated the mime play and Happy Days from their subsequent 1973 tour of the Beckett Festival bill. They reduced the program to the comparatively safe Krapp's Last Tape--with a stage manager stopping and starting the real tape for the otherwise "distracted" Cronyn--and Not I. This was a debilitating workout but not as draining as when paired with Happy Days (Alan Schneider, "Hume's First Tape and Related Matters" [Arena Stage News: Arena Stage theater, 1973] 2).

During rehearsals for the 1974-75 National Theatre version, Beckett told director Peter Hall that the flaming parasol had bewildered many "fire authorities and theatre technicians. He now asks that the parasol merely smokes and the material melts away like some kind of plastic under heat" (Peter Hall's Diaries, ed. John Goodwin [New York: Limelight, 1985] 124).

Four years later Beckett called for smoke in his Royal Court production. The smoke was activated by pressing a button on the parasol handle, which triggered a battery fuse connected to a smoke tablet in the metal casing. To prevent an accidental firing after this action, a backup parasol was placed on the mound for the second act (Knowlson 176, 186).

[16] A rose-oriented set also helped foreground Renaud during her first attempt at Winnie, directed by Roger Blin at the Odeon Theatre de France in 1963. Following is an account of the palette of the design:

> In the New York production, the sky had been blue, but [set designer] Matias wanted to stress heat more than pleasure. He wanted the audience to be discomfited by the intense glare brought on by a sky in gradations of a single color; the top was bright orange, and the very bottom was pale, which Blin remembers as so pale that it sometimes seemed gray. Renaud, as Winnie, was dressed in rose, and the strip of sky directly behind her also had a rosy glow. The platform which comprised her mound was all of orange shaded toward brown. Because the audience's eye was constantly disconcerted by all the orange, it was always drawn back to the actress, whose rosy glow was the only comforting area on the stage (Bair 564-65).

[17] Beckett's barren environment has prompted many

improvisations. In the mid-1970s director Ryan Cutrona, then a graduate student at the University of North Carolina, surrounded Winnie the "super pack rat" with a four-foot-high fortress of de-baled old clothes colored in dark blue, light blue, acqua and white. "I couldn't bring in sand," explains Cutrona, who has since performed and/or adapted a number of Beckett's shorter stage pieces and fiction. "A drop cloth painted with sand wouldn't be realistic. Old junk clothes had a desolation of their own and sort of a clownish quality." In keeping with the trashy visuals, an old parachute served as the backdrop. Cutrona describes the ambience as "decrepit boudoir" (Interview, 20 March 1988).

Winnie and Willie's home was wilder in a 1975 production at Stanford University. Director Charles R. Lyons supervised a junkpile of toilets, car mufflers, old furniture. Winnie is "trapped in the realities of the '70s," he reasoned (Paul Emerson, "Samuel Beckett Plays to Be Featured in Festival at Stanford," Palo Alto Times 20 June, 1975: 16).

Other choice observations about set designs:

(a) "A speckled pink mushroom purpled by decay" (Clive Barnes, New York Times 22 Nov. 1972: 24). Quizzed about this description, designer Schmidt said:

> It was a bit more light-hearted. I tried not to emphasize the darker side...It was almost like a costume...The backdrop was pink and orange--it was kind of hot-looking and barren...I expected Beckett to be fairly monochromatic, in grays and colors of despair, so I went with a much more offbeat kind of palette (Interview).

(b) "A gravelike beach" (F. Marcus, Sunday Telegraph 16 March 1975. Rpt. in London Theatre Record 4: 1067).

(c) "[A] single, Amazonian breast of dead earth" (Albert Bermel, "Beckett without Metaphysics," Performance 1 [1971]: 121).

(d) "A dazzling white snow-cap, outsize wedding cake, or wedding dress" (John Gill, Time Out 29 Nov. 1984. Rpt. in London Theatre Record 4: 1066).

Beckett drew a wave-like side view of the mound before the world premiere of Happy Days (Letter to Schneider, 1961, Schneider Collection). About 14 years later, sections of John Bury's National Theatre set mimicked breakers (Rosemary Pountney, Journal of Beckett Studies 1 [1976] 102).

[18] Willie's lewdness was intensified in Schneider's 1972 production, with Cronyn and Tandy surveying a Victorian-era postcard of a nude woman, her buttocks prominent (Rehearsal photo, Forum theater, Lincoln Center, November 1972, Schneider Papers). Four years earlier, Sada Thompson and Wyman Pendleton had gazed at a much tamer image of a Picassoesque abstract painting (Contact sheet, Studio Arena Theatre, Buffalo, N.Y., September 1968, Schneider Papers).

[19] In Beckett's Waiting for Godot Didi and Gogo pass the time with a *commedia*-like exchange of hats.

[20] Ashcroft and Hall reinstated sections of the parasol business Beckett wanted cut (Knowlson 176).

[21] Beckett originally rejected Winnie's mention of "blessing" as a cue for Willie's tumble: "Willie's behavior

never tied up with Winnie...It is not ever certain that he hears her. Coincidence therefore. German translator asked today if his 'collapse'...depended on his hearing word 'blessing.' No. Coincidence. Sorry" (Letter to Schneider, 17 Aug. 1961, Schneider Collection).

[22] Following is Beckett's division of the "fear no more"-apology passage: phrases of 16 to 20 words in the first gabbled section; three single words after the break; unbroken babble of 50 words "(51 actually if I count right") (Knowlson 174).

[23] Like Voskovec, John C. Becher delivered a few lively gutturals in the 1961 production. Here is his director on the actor answering Ruth White/Winnie's "Them or it?" question: "Then a pause, a tilt of his head upward, followed by Johnny's still, small kazoo of a voice: 'It'" (Alan Schneider, Entrances: An American Director's Journey [New York: Viking Penguin, 1986] 298).

[24] Worth's Winnie provoked a stream of unfavorable musical analogies from one reviewer: "Her speech is so full of accelerandos, rallentandos, unnecessary crescendos, capricious diminuendos, and all sorts of rubatos that one feels in the presence not of a real human being but of some dreadful talking or singing doll out of E.T.A. Hoffman or Pierre Boulez's underground electrical Hell's Kitchen." George Voskovec, he added, had an "ugly Czech accent so incommensurate with Worth's melodious strains...further uncalled-for cacophony" (John Simon, New York 25 June 1979:

72).

[25] Beckett literally conducted the laughs of Whitelaw and Leonard Fenton in 1979. Fenton began by uttering four short laughs. Whitelaw joined him on laugh three and offered eight short ones. Fenton rejoined her on laugh No. 7 and continued for four short ones (Knowlson 174).

[26] Thanks to many consultations with Beckett, Whitelaw is a library of alien hyphenations. Among her favorites are "sequel"/"seek-well" and "windlessness"/"wind-less-ness" (Nicholas Zurbrugg, "Interview with Billie Whitelaw," Review of Contemporary Fiction 7 [1987]: 110).

[27] At least one Winnie has folded bits and pieces from another area of Great Britain into her voice. According to a reviewer, Brenda Bruce in George Devine's production at the Royal Court was "slightly Scots, like a nice pert nannie" (Eric Keown, Punch 7 [Nov. 1962]: 689).

[28] Willie, called "B" in Beckett's first draft, reads: "Rocket strikes Pomona, seven thousand missing...Rocket strikes Man, one female lavatory attendant spared...Aberrant rocket strikes [Erin], eighty-three priests spared..." (Gontarski, Manuscript Study 40).

[29] Physical problems dogged Mann during her 1988 run at the Magic Theatre. Body imprisonment aggravated the arthritis in her neck and lower back. Leg cramps occasionally seized her, especially after two performances on Sundays. The theater's dressing rooms were in an upheaval at the time, so she "longed for an extended period

of solitude," especially during intermissions. The superstitious were even reluctant to call her by her first name, which of course is a formalized version of Winnie. Relaxation, she says, often came in the form of long walks along a nearby seawall before and after shows.

Mann's bad luck continued the same Sunday night the production closed. Another leg cramp forced her to leap from her bed. Her feet touched a piece of newspaper, she slipped and fell to the floor, and her right wrist "broke into smithereens" (Interview, 30 Sept. 1988).

[30] Winnie and Willie's behavior overlapped more often in pre-production scripts. In Beckett's first holograph, Winnie was much more revengeful, striking her partner three times with her parasol. "First, it revealed a cruel streak in Winnie early in the play, and second, Willie was the direct victim of Winnie's cruelty, a cruelty for which we can see a rational albeit accidental, cause." Willie originally softened, rather than hardened, his responses during the audibility exam. And Winnie was a much more sexually oriented creature. The dalliance with Mr. John(s)ton(e), she said, "...vanquished my scruples. Old enough to be my father in those days and indeed...my grandfather. He was eager to put his tongue in my mouth." One of Winnie's time markers was recalling love-making tally-sticks: "There was a time, do you remember, when once a month was enough...Don't you remember? Once a month!...then once a fortnight..." (Gontarski, Manuscript Study 51, 54,

41, 42).

Some Winnies have borrowed a manner or two from the swinish Willie. Schneider, for example, dogged his 1968 actress, Sada Thompson, to "Really spit" and "SPIT!" the toothpaste. The director apparently wanted to poke fun at Winnie's habitual daintiness (Rehearsal/production notes, September 1968, Schneider Papers).

[31] Following are addtitional comments about Renaud's consistently theatrical approach. "Renaud played an actress playing an actress, but lost contact with her fellow-actor; and the director, Roger Blin, seems to have conceived of the play as little more than self-conscious theatricalism" (Bermel 126). "Madeleine's performance, which I watched several times, was more relentless and harsher than Ruth's, which gave the play more humor and humanity, as well as variety" (Schneider, Entrances 300).

Renaud has also earned raves like the following: "She speaks with the same controlled ritualistic intensity of the classical tradition that I saw in the flamenco dancing in Madrid" (Max Lerner, "Homecoming," New York Post 20 Dec. 1963).

[32] The second-half slump in quality of Winnie's literary allusions is debatable. Ruby Cohn notes: "She actually quotes from such sentimental versifiers as Charles Wolfe, rather than from the great poets of the English language." S.E. Gontarski claims: "The judgment is at least open to question, since in Act II Winnie also quotes from Milton,

Keats, Shakespeare, and Yeats, as well as Wolfe, but Beckett's literary judgments may be less in question here than the importance he seems to attach to the quotations" (S.E. Gontarski, "Literary Allusions in Happy Days," On Beckett: Essays and Criticism, ed. Gontarski [New York: Grove Press, 1986] 313).

[33] Here are a few more examples of how body type has figured prominently. Like Whitelaw, Darlene Johnson, the Winnie in The Shared Experience's 1984 London production, upgraded the youthful sexiness: "She is a throaty vamp in a black negligee, orange lipstick and the blonde curls of a 1950s starlet. Of old age or decreptitude there is not a trace" (Jack Tinder, Guardian 23 Nov. 1984. Repr. in London Theatre Record 4: 1067). "Her face was positively illuminating," wrote a reviewer of Thompson, "with an unendurably bright sense of bourgeois pleasure, the kind of face that makes you think of no meal so much as breakfast" (Clive Barnes, New York Times 14 Oct. 1968: 54). According to one onlooker, Tandy owned a "scraggily indomitable neck" (Barnes 1972).

"I think round when I think of Ruth White," recalls Alan Mandell, business manager for the Lincoln Center Repertory Company in 1972. "Jessica was more angular" (Interview, 19 July 1988.)

[34] Composer Earl Kim understood the heightened dramatics of the Milly-to-final-tableau section. In 1979 he extracted this portion from the play, scored it for piano, and

incorporated the piece into Narratives, his anthology of music-theater works with words from Beckett's Lessness, Eh Joe, Enough, Act without Words II, etc. Following is a program description of Melodrama I for Woman's Voice and Piano, which Worth narrated about four months before opening in Andrei Serban's Happy Days:

> A narrative in which a little girl secretly undresses her newly acquired dolly under the dining room table. A mouse runs up her thigh--she screams--the family comes running to see what could possibly be the matter--too late! This episode is interrupted by disjunct recollections of youthful romance--musings on loneliness--a faded strain from a forgotten waltz (Narratives, by Earl Kim, with Irene Worth and others. Ariel Chamber Orchestra, 9 and 11-12 Feb. 1979, Loeb Drama Center, Harvard University).

[35] Winnie is called Mildred (also Bee) in Beckett's first typescript (Gontarski, Manuscript Study 9).

[36] "It's not clear that you tell the Milly story to cheer yourself up" (Schneider, rehearsal notes for Tandy, 21 Oct. 1972, Schneider Papers).

Schneider considered Happy Days a special case. For years it remained his favorite stage work by Beckett (Entrances 300). He invoked the play to turn diplomat when asked to choose a top pick: "...So the choice is: them, or it? Which is what Winnie says to Willie in that wonderful moment in Happy Days when she is searching for the proper pronoun to describe the hair on his head. 'Them, or it?' There is a long pause and then Willie answers, 'It.'"

"I guess that's my answer, this time, too. It" ("Hume's First Tape and Related Matters," Washington Star-News 16

Sept. 1973).

[37] Apparently, White's nervousness eased during her second attempt at Winnie in 1965: "Ruth, less fearful than before, was as win-some and ebullient as ever" (Schneider, Entrances 366). A number of theatrical insiders claim that White's Winnie was legendary for its balance of earthiness and flightiness. Her actor brother, Charles, insists she borrowed from many resources. Aunt Gertrude was "a dressy lady, a free soul, a great wit and a great beauty who had had a very hard life but never knew it. She eloped very romantically with a man of a different religion, married twice, raised two kids alone. She always seemed to be on top of things, even though you knew she didn't have a cent in her pocket. She might have 50 cents in her hand bag but she would not let anyone know about it. Life never seemed to get her down."

White also pickpocketed a flaky neighbor who "thought we were in World War II fighting the 'Rooosians.'"

Winnie relies heavily on literary classics and toiletries. The offstage White was similarly reflective and domestic. "She read a lot of religion and philosophy," claims her brother, "yet she thought about a slipcover for a chair, and making tea sandwiches." The Irish Catholic Winnie coaxes optimism from the blackest moments and despair from joy. White was raised in a philosophically bi-polar Irish Catholic family. "Our parents essentially told us that you're ugly but it's alright," recalls Charles White.

"You're never going to be hurt or crushed by anyone after you've grown up with Irish parents. They start you with no false hopes" (Interview, 1 April 1988).

Playwright Edward Albee helped persuade White to originate Winnie and co-produced her 1965 production. He recalls the actress demonstrated that "even in hopelessness, there is hope. She never despaired totally... There was always whistling in the dark." According to Albee, White could not be pigeonholed as either an aristocratic, "suburban" or "peasant" character. She was all of these, and many more. White's distant, drained second-act aurals helped convince Albee to select her to play the disembodied Voice in the 1968 debut of his play Box (Interview, 13 Nov. 1988).

A mere 5-foot-4, White was versatile enough to simulate a 300-pound bald lesbian. "Did she know what a lesbian was?" asks her brother. "I doubt it. But she was a master character actress: She just took over roles--externally, internally... There was a saying in the theater business: If you can't cast it, get Ruth White" (Interview).

[38] Like O'Kelly, Angela Paton was sexually abused in her youth. Unlike O'Kelly's, Mildred's long, desperate pause was the character's, not Paton's (Interview, 19 June 1988).

[39] Like Happy Days, White remained a warm presence for Schneider for many years. He even conjured Winnie's spirit in a published eulogy for the actress: "And our sadness is, in Samuel Beckett's own words, like the sadness after song.

There is a sadness in our hearts and we shall always miss your sweet song, dear Ruthie" (Alan Schneider, "Ruth White: 1914-1969," New York Times 14 Dec. 1969: C7).

[40] After "Sing your old song, Winnie" Beckett instructed Whitelaw to hum two lines from "I Love You So"--a textual addition which was disrupted by her first awareness of Fenton/Willie (Knowlson 132).

[41] Schneider once clarified this light-hearted stage direction for an Italian graduate student: "Dressed to kill is a pun. Certainly Willie is what we call dressed up, in mourning clothes. The fact that he might want to kill Winnie in order to put her out of her misery is something implied. Certainly, he should not be carrying a machine gun" (Letter to Mario Molinari, 22 April 1974, Schneider Papers).

[42] None of the four Willies interviewed agreed with the author's assessment that the crawling Willie may be dead and therefore a character in Winnie's dream "feast."

[43] In early drafts Willie wore "striped pyjamas" and was first seen "...sleeping, hanging so far forward that only his buttocks and foreshortened back are visible, his arms on his knees and his head on his arms. Bare flesh between trousers and coat of pyjamas" (Gontarski, Manuscript Study 32).

[44] At least one program designer has picked up on this description. A bird (Winnie) perches on the shell of a tortoise (Willie) on the cover of the playbill for a 13-17

April 1983 version of Happy Days at Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg, Va. (Schneider Papers).

[45] Spring-up paper flowers sprouted from the hand of the Willie in Claire Devedson's 1984 production in London (Gill 1066).

[46] Beckett's earliest list of options was shorter and more direct: "the revolver...or me" (Gontarski, Manuscript Study 37).

[47] Schneider insists that he convinced Beckett to choose "I Love You So" over "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling." As he explains: "...I thought the 'Irish Eyes' lyrics were a bit too much on the nose. I liked the schmaltz of 'The Merry Widow.' Perhaps it was overly sentimental. But in the context of Winnie's unusual circumstances, perhaps the sentiment would seem justified or, at least, suitably ironic" (Entrances 294).

[48] Beckett has cut the duration of the Happy Days bells as well. The first bell originally lasted 10 seconds; now the playwright prefers one and a half seconds. The second bell once rang five seconds; two and a half ticks is the playwright's current suggestion (Knowlson 189).

A gentler alarm clock awakened Winnie in Beckett's first three drafts. The device "offered Winnie a guide to the possible relief from the travails of the day...a guide not usually afforded Beckett characters" (Gontarski, Manuscript Study 37, 38).

"A mere nagging buzz" sounded in John Berry's 1963 Irish

production with Marie Kean (James Knowlson, ed., Samuel Beckett's 'Happy Days'/'Oh! Les Beaux Jours' [Boston: Faber and Faber, 1978] 98).

[49] Winnie's death-in-life apparently colors her creator's philosophy. Beckett: "I want to drown." Interviewer: "If you truly do, why don't you?" Beckett: "I can't. I still have so many responsibilities" (Mira Avrech, "A Friend Recalls Affectionately a Shy Nobel Prize Playwright Named Samuel Beckett," People 28 Nov. 1981: 48-49).

The late Jack MacGowran, a close friend of Beckett's celebrated for his one-man show End of Day, captured the playwright's ambivalence toward life when he said:

> The key word in my show is one I think is the key word in all of Beckett's writings: "perhaps." He is sure of only two things: he was born and he will die. Perhaps the world will be better--perhaps God will be there--this may happen and Beckett will be pleased. There is more hope than despair in Beckett and I felt I had to correct the seriousness with which he is taken (Bair 555).

Beckett in a way foreshadowed Winnie's draining life in his Proust study. "The mortal microcosm cannot forgive the relative immortality of the macrocosm," he wrote. "The whisky bears a grudge against the decanter" (Richard N. Coe, Samuel Beckett [New York: Grove Press, 1968] 19).

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APPENDIX: VITA

William Geoffrey Gehman was born to Ada Nora Patricia Gehman and Clarence Harvey Gehman on 29 April 1958 in New York, N.Y. He graduated from Lafayette College in Easton, Pa., in June 1980 with a bachelor of arts degree in psychology. The "moral" fiction of the American novelist, writing teacher and medieval-literature scholar John Gardner was the topic of his undergraduate thesis. From 1980 to 1984 he wrote for The Globe-Times in Bethlehem, Pa., serving as arts editor for the last three and a half years. For four years he has been an arts reporter for The Morning Call in Allentown, Pa. He is married to Mimi Collins Gehman and lives with her daughter, Mara, in Bethlehem.

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